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**Instructional Leadership in a  
Cross-country Comparative Context:  
Case Studies in English and Greek  
High Performing Secondary Schools**

**by**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of Warwick, Centre for Education Studies

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To the most valuable people in my life,  
my mother and father,  
whose actions and attitude to life  
taught me that ‘we are what we  
repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is  
not an act, but a habit.’ (Aristotle)

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and no material from this thesis has been used or published previously. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the application of the model of instructional leadership at high-performing secondary schools in England and Greece. This helped the researcher to develop a model of instructional leadership in a centralised context. A qualitative multiple case design allowed detailed data to be collected on four high performing secondary schools, using the interpretivist paradigm. The enquiry was conducted using mixed methods, including semi-structured interviews with various data sets (stakeholders) within and outside the school, observation of leadership practice and meetings, and scrutiny of relevant macro and micro policy documents. The three-layer comparative framework designed to identify the similarities and differences in leadership variables within and across the countries, shed light on the cross-case analysis of the case studies within a centralised (Greece) and a partially decentralised (England) education context.

The empirical lessons from this study show that instructional leadership is implemented in different ways in diverse contexts. The findings from the two Greek case study schools are interwoven with the official multi-dimensional role of Greek headteachers, which leaves little space for undertaking instructional leadership dimensions. In the absence of such official instructional leadership ‘actors’, teachers’ leadership has been expanding, and the research identifies aspects of informal collaborative leadership practices in Greece. In contrast, the decentralization of school activities creates the platform for the emergence of shared and distributed leadership within the English context, while various school actors have direct and indirect involvement in pedagogical leadership for school improvement. This cross-country comparative study provides new evidence about how instructional leadership is contextually bounded and inevitably influenced by the extent and nature of centralisation or decentralisation in the education system.

## Abbreviations

<b>AfL</b>	Assessment for Learning
<b>ASEP</b>	Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection
<b>ASPETE</b>	School of Pedagogical and Technological Education
<b>AST</b>	Advanced Skills Teachers
<b>ATL</b>	Attitude to Learning
<b>BA</b>	Bachelor of Arts
<b>BELMAS</b>	British Educational Leadership, Management & Administration Society
<b>BERA</b>	British Educational Research Association
<b>BLP</b>	Building Learning Power
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>DfEE</b>	Department for Education and Employment
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DfES</b>	Department for Education and Skills
<b>DL</b>	Distributed Leadership
<b>EBITT</b>	Employment-based Initial Teacher Training
<b>EDE</b>	Sworn Administrative Investigation
<b>EKFE</b>	Laboratory Centre of Physical Sciences
<b>ERA</b>	Education Reform Act
<b>ERIC</b>	Education Resources Information Center
<b>ESI</b>	Effective School Improvement
<b>ESRC</b>	Economic and Social Research Council
<b>FEK</b>	Government Official Gazette
<b>GCSE</b>	General Certificate of Secondary Education
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HoD</b>	Head of Department
<b>HPSS</b>	High-Performing Secondary Schools
<b>IL</b>	Instructional Leadership

<b>INSET</b>	In-Service Training
<b>ISSPP</b>	International Successful School Principalship Project
<b>JSTOR</b>	JSTOR Online Digital Library
<b>KS3, KS4</b>	Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>LfL</b>	Leadership for Learning
<b>LISA</b>	Leadership Improvement for Student Achievement
<b>L&amp;T</b>	Learning and Teaching
<b>MA</b>	Master of Arts
<b>ML</b>	Middle Leaders
<b>MSc</b>	Master of Science
<b>NCSL</b>	National College for School Leadership
<b>NPQH</b>	National Professional Qualification for Headship
<b>NSS</b>	National Support School
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OEPEK</b>	Organisation of the In-Service Training of Teachers
<b>OFSTED</b>	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
<b>OLME</b>	Federation of Secondary School Teacher Union
<b>PEK</b>	Regional In-Service Training Centre
<b>PhD</b>	Doctor of Philosophy
<b>PE</b>	Physical Education
<b>PI</b>	Pedagogical Institute
<b>PIMRS</b>	Principals' Instructional Management Rating Scale
<b>PLC</b>	Professional Learning Community
<b>PT</b>	Private Tuition
<b>PYSDE</b>	Regional Service Councils for Secondary Education
<b>RAGG</b>	RED, AMBER, GREEN, GOLD (system of monitoring student progress in school B)
<b>SEF</b>	School Evaluation Form
<b>SELME</b>	Training School of Secondary Education Workers

<b>SES</b>	Socio-economic Status
<b>SCITT</b>	School-centred Initial Teacher Training
<b>SIMS</b>	Student Intervention Monitoring System
<b>SL</b>	Senior Leaders
<b>SLT</b>	Senior Leadership Team
<b>SMT</b>	Senior Management Team
<b>TALIS</b>	Teaching and Learning International Survey
<b>TIMMS</b>	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
<b>TLA</b>	Teaching & Learning Academy
<b>T&amp;L</b>	Teaching and Learning
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>US(A)</b>	United States (of America)
<b>VfL</b>	Vision for Learning
<b>Vs</b>	Versus
<b>YPEPTH</b>	Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs
<b>Y9, Y10, Y11</b>	Year 9, Year 10, Year 11



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Background

In an era of globalisation and policy reform, building a comparative school leadership study involves a challenging research journey. In the light of constant changes and policy instability, this thesis examines the enactment of instructional leadership in high-performing secondary schools within a cross-country comparative framework. Given the contribution of educational leadership practices to student outcomes (e.g. Bush and Glover, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2006b; Southworth, 2002; Fullan, 2001) and the limited empirical and comparative studies about instructional leadership in secondary education, this thesis explores a relatively new paradigm- instructional leadership reincarnated in the form of ‘leadership for learning’- for school leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hallinger, 2009), within the context of a centralised system (Greece) and a partially decentralised system (England).

The researcher’s rationale for her focus on leadership at outstanding secondary schools is based on the assumption that instructional leadership is more visible in schools which have been recognised as high-performing. As Murphy et al. (2007) highlight, leaders in high-performing schools devote their energy to the development of a vision of learning through fostering student learning and promoting professional development. For the purposes of this thesis, high performing secondary schools are defined as the schools which have achieved exceptionally good results in their national examinations (e.g. GCSE examination results for England and pan-hellenic national exams for Greece) and,

in the case of England, have been judged outstanding by Ofsted in their most recent inspections. As explained in chapter three, these elements determine ‘high performance’ as there was no other common basis for ensuring ‘like with like’ comparability.

Unpacking the model of instructional leadership in order to address whether, and to what extent, the instructional leadership approach has been embraced by English and Greek school headteachers<sup>1</sup>, helped the researcher to develop some theories in action and reconstruct the IL model for a centralised educational context (see chapter nine).

## **The Conceptual Basis of the Study**

The conceptual framework that informs this doctoral study is operationalised as a particular model of educational leadership, notably instructional leadership. Reviewing theoretical and empirical literature in different international contexts showed that there are two key influences on student learning: classroom practice and leadership (e.g. Lee and Dimmock, 1999; Mulford and Silins, 2003; OECD, 2005; Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Fullan, 2005; Day et al., 2007b; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Day et al., 2008; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2008; Dempster and Bagakis, 2009; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009a,b; Bush et al., 2010; Hallinger and Heck, 2011). These influences suggest that an instructional leadership focus is an important

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis the author uses the term ‘headteacher’ and ‘principal’ synonymously, while the term ‘leader’ is used for senior, middle and teacher leaders in the English context, but in the Greek cases it substitutes members of the school management team (headteacher, deputy head and the school teachers association), for a consistent use of language throughout the thesis.

pathway for teachers' professional improvement and student learning. As this thesis is focused on schools in England and Greece, the conceptualization of instructional leadership within both contexts is described below and, in more depth, in chapter two.

The literature shows that the practice of instructional leadership has been barely considered in the Greek context. This model, labeled as instructional leadership (Southworth, 2002), and leadership for learning (MacBeath and Swaffield, 2008), remains under-researched in England, while prominent studies (e.g. Earley et al., 2002; Day et al., 2007b; Higham et al., 2007; MacFarlane and Woods, 2011) echo school leaders' involvement in practices related to IL. There has been very little discussion in Greece about how leadership is conceptualized by school practitioners, on how student outcomes are improved, and whether and how leadership impacts on school improvement (e.g. Demertzi et al., 2009). This thesis provides significant new evidence on the operation of instructional leadership in two dissimilar countries.

### The concept of instructional leadership

Despite the debate regarding the 'conceptual elasticity' (MacBeath and Townsend, 2011a: 5) of this concept, related to the focus on 'instruction [which] predisposes people to think in terms of teaching rather than learning [...] (MacBeath, 2006: 39), the researcher decided to keep 'instructional leadership' as a working term. The etymology of the name which is derived from the Latin word 'instruere', meaning to 'teach, prepare, build', has been approached by the researcher, under its wider connotation of 'inform, tutor, coach, guide' with the purpose of learning, which is the main purpose of education, tied to teaching.

The researcher's emphasis on 'instruction' in its widest sense includes i) teachers instructing students for academic learning, and ii) teachers coaching teachers for professional learning, is intended to ensure that her focus is on the learner (student, teacher-learner) through the lens of teaching, as those two notions are recognized by the researcher as 'twins' and indispensable poles for academic and professional growth.

Given the growing demand for English schools to respond to high accountability measures, and the lack of effective pedagogical guidance in the Greek system, a need to understand how instructional organizational systems promote teaching and learning seems to be pivotal. In this framework, teachers are not only professionals for raising student results, but they also contribute to pedagogical learning within a shared interactive environment.

## **Aims of this Research**

The purpose of this enquiry is to investigate the nature of instructional leadership within high-performing schools in a cross-country comparative context, notably the English and Greek secondary school systems. Within this framework, the research, also:

- explores whether and to what extent this leadership approach has been embraced by English and Greek school leadership,
- examines the impact of the implementation of this leadership approach on teachers' performance and student outcomes, as well as its significance for teachers' professional development, and,

- identifies how much a ‘top-down’ approach to school leadership can influence school improvement.

At a time of educational change in England and Greece, this research study examines comparative practice within the same theoretical framework in two dissimilar contexts. As a consequence, this evidence-informed approach adds value to our understanding of comparative educational management and leadership.

This research offers a significant contribution to the field, as it is believed to be the first in-depth, empirical and comparative study, on how instructional leadership is conceptualized and practiced in England and Greece. This study contributes to the understanding of professional knowledge and practice in an international context.

## **Research Questions**

The study examines whether English and Greek principals are instructional leaders and how approaches to instructional leadership differ between centralised and decentralised systems. Given this context, the following main research questions have been addressed by this research study:

- *What is the nature of instructional leadership in English high-performing secondary schools?*
- *What is the nature of instructional leadership in Greek high-performing secondary schools?*

Since the purpose of the study is exploratory, to portray the nature of instructional leadership in Greece and England, the researcher adopted a qualitative mixed methods approach, as explained in chapter three. Each research question has been explored through a range of methods in order to provide valid insights. In terms of respondent triangulation, cross-checking different data sets' responses helped the researcher to construct the picture of how instructional leadership (IL) is conceptualised in the researched contexts. Methodological triangulation was achieved through:

- scrutinising schools' internal documents such as school evaluation forms (SEF), minutes of senior leadership team (SLT) meetings, and external documents such as policy documents, and strategic school plans (only for England) to gain insights into the operational target-setting plan, indicating the distributed activities by the SLT members, and subject advisers' pedagogical planning documents (Greece only).
- observing meetings to explore the main themes discussed and the extent to which leadership members discuss instructional leadership activities, along with shadowing the headteachers to indicate the frequency of their engagement in activities and behaviours related to leadership for learning.
- interview questions (see interview schedule A-D), which examined the role of the principal, and other school leaders, in managing teaching and learning.

The main research questions led to certain sub-questions, which are discussed below:

- i) *Whether, and to what extent, English and Greek principals are instructional leaders?*
- ii) *If so, how do they act as instructional leaders?*
- iii) *What is the relationship between instructional leadership and student outcomes?*
- iv) *How does instructional leadership impact on teachers' performance?*
- v) *How does instructional leadership impact on teachers' professional development?*
- vi) *What is the relationship between instructional leadership and school improvement?*
- vii) *How do approaches to instructional leadership differ between centralised systems (e.g. Greece) and 'partially de-centralised' systems (e.g. England)?*

## **The Significance of a Comparative Study**

Dimmock and Walker (1998, 2000a;b) highlight the need to develop a comparative and international branch of educational leadership and management as there is a growing awareness of the globalisation of educational policy and practice. Conducting comparative research offers the potential to provide insights into policy (Watson, 2001; Rui, 2007) and practice, while Crossley and Watson (2004: 9) identify the need 'to bridge the theory-practice divide.' Identifying common characteristics of educationally high performing schools, as well as the differences across the contexts, contributes to the knowledge base within

European centralised and decentralised educational systems. Similarly, Crossley's (2000: 75) argument that 'our theoretical advances will be much enhanced if [researchers] are more effectively grounded in practice' supports this study's aim to enhance theoretical significance (see chapter nine) grounded in comparative empirical research.

The value of comparing schools in different countries relates to both policy and practice. Whilst benchmarking leads to the identification of practices which the researched countries have adopted to make macro policy effective in their context, other countries could profitably learn from this comparative enquiry (Dimmock and Walker, 2000b). Given that 'the way policy is made is highly contextualised and its implementation even more context-dependent' (Rui, 2007: 241), the researcher's main intention was to explore whether there was any diversity within the systems per se, and how the notion of 'one country, one system' (Bray and Kai, 2007: 128) applies within the researched contexts.

## **Policy Context of the Study**

Bearing in mind that 'context matters' (Crossley and Watson, 2004: 6), the identification of relevant policy characteristics is beneficial for the reader's understanding. Setting the policy landscape into context was an important first step when the researcher constructed the architecture for this comparative study. As Southworth (2003: 1) argues, 'context [...] includes understanding the policy environments in which we work, particularly when you work in a devolved system such as [...] in [...] England'. Aspects of the macro policy context,



discussed below, have significant implications for understanding IL at a micro level, as described mainly in chapters four to nine.

### Policy perspectives in England

In England, the Department for Education (DfE) is the government department responsible for the overall provision of the education service, determining national policies and planning the direction of the system (Eurypedia, 2013a). Local authorities (LAs) have the responsibility for the management and administration of education at local level but their significance has been reduced by the advent of academies and free schools, which are independent of LAs. The administration of the education system is provided at national and local government level. As Day et al. (2007b: 3) state 'England has a relatively decentralised education system with many leadership and management decisions taken at a school level.'

The Department for Education sets out the framework for headteachers' responsibilities. Identifying the main leadership and management responsibilities of headteachers, mainly through the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (DCSF, 2008a) and DfES (2004), shows that the role of the headteacher has a strategic orientation, for example:

- shaping the future
- setting high expectations for the quality of teaching and learning,

joined with an inevitable managerial role, through:

- appointing and managing staff
- fulfilling their responsibilities for standards in teaching and learning (T&L) in order to secure their accountability for school performance
- liaising with unions.

Day et al. (2008: 11) highlight that, '[in] the English school's policy context [...] the work of headteachers- and, therefore, their staff- is subject to a range of policy imperatives which, depending on perspective, act as 'drivers', encouraging schools to improve through the challenges they offer [...].' This statement shows the mediating and moderating role of headteachers, to create the conditions in which teachers perform in order to improve outcomes. To understand the way leadership is conceptualised in the devolved English system requires recognition of the vital connection between leadership and improvement, as confirmed by the plethora of literature in chapter two. NCSL (2003a) claims that distributed leadership is an effective way to transform practice and outcomes.

The Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 was a significant time for English schools as the National Curriculum was introduced along with local management of schools, national testing and publication of examination results and inspection of schools, but it also created 'stringent forms of public accountability and quality assurance of teaching' (O'Brien, 2011: 321). Policy initiatives for raising standards in schools have been continued, while the importance of school improvement through enhancing leadership has been addressed in White Papers (e.g. DfEE, 1997). During the period from 2001 to 2010, there was a rapid educational change which had the intention to create a world class education system. This determination was applied through the DCSF's (2008b) emphasis

on personalized education. Also, the investment in headship preparation through NCSL<sup>2</sup> programmes, which supported school leadership at different stages, showed that ‘improving schools has become an important focus of national [English government]’. (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009a: 361) The emergence of programmes associated with leadership development (e.g. NPQH, Leading from the Middle) confirmed that NCSL (2003a; NCSL, 2001) was perceived as a vehicle for implementing government policy on leadership and teaching.

Significant changes have been introduced by the Coalition government since 2010. The Academies Act of 2010 provided for outstanding primary and secondary schools, as rated by Ofsted, to seek academy status, thus securing greater autonomy. The DfE (2013) argues for the ‘urgent need to reform [the] school system to prevent the standard of education in the UK from failing further behind that of other countries.’ As Dimmock (2012: 161) points out ‘[t]hese ‘new’ academies will have greater freedoms and will be outside local authority control [,]’ while empowering headteachers to provide students with more specialist teaching. This relocation of the LA control to school sponsors has generated controversy mainly targeted to their power and ‘freedom to innovate and raise standards’ which may lead to undermining other state-funded schools services, and the privatization of education services (<http://antiacademies.org.uk>; [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)). PriceWaterhouseCoopers’ (2008) evaluation supported the critique that academies are selective in the acceptance of their students.

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<sup>2</sup>National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is the name used in this thesis as the scrutinized documents used this title. After being renamed as National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services, the name has been changed and it is now called National College for Leadership and Teaching.

Similarly, other recent literature (e.g. Gunter, 2011) shows the various perspectives of the heavily criticized programme.

Raising standards in teaching and learning, improving teaching quality, and giving more autonomy to headteachers and teachers, were among the major intentions in 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE White Paper, 2010) and subsequent legislation (the Education Act 2011) in England, showing an increased intention to strengthen headteachers and teachers' authority to improve schools. As Abbott et al. (2013: 182) mention, '[t]he title of the White Paper is intriguing and suggests that the teaching profession is seen as central to the government's aim to improve the education system.' The Coalition government's intention to show a focus on individual school's improvement pathway has raised the expectations of school stakeholders' accountability. 'Teaching schools [were also] established to disseminate good practice and to take greater responsibility for the initial training and continuing professional development of teachers.' (Abbott et al., 2013: 184)

### Policy perspectives in Greece

A main characteristic of the educational system in Greece is its hierarchical structure, and this top-down approach leads to a highly centralised educational system, where administrative control remains focused at the central level, and is perceived to be centralised and bureaucratic (e.g. Andreou and Papakonstadinou, 1994; Andreou and Papantonopoulos, 2001; Iordanides, 2002; Kazamias and Kassotakis, 1995; Saiti, 2000; Saitis, 2002; Athanasoula- Reppa and Lazaridou,

2008). The central level, which is represented by the Ministry of Education,<sup>3</sup> is responsible for determining national policy and ensuring the implementation of the educational laws and the associated administrative decisions, monitoring the administration of all the schools in the country, planning the direction of the system, administering the budget, supervising its decentralised services, approving school curricula and appointing teaching staff. (Eurydice, 2003) In spite of attempts at decentralization, such as the Pedagogical Institute (PI)<sup>4</sup>, a decentralised public service, which formulates guidelines, drafts the curricula and timetable, introduces innovation, applies new teaching methods, promotes in-service training to teachers, approves and orders textbooks, the Ministry retains the power to supervise its decentralised services.

The centralised Greek context is also evident through the administration of both education levels (primary and secondary), which is inevitably conducted hierarchically. Certain bodies, for, instance, the Directorates of Education (at a prefecture level), Education offices of secondary education (at district level), and the school principal (at school level), are involved in the administrative hierarchy (Eurypedia, 2013b). Thirteen Regional Education Directorates are under the control of the Minister of Education and are responsible for implementing educational policy, linking local agents to central services and

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<sup>3</sup>Since 2009 (the beginning of this doctoral research study), the name of the governmental ministry has been renamed after the Greek elections, as shown below: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs- YPEPTH (until 2009), Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (October 2009- March 2012), Ministry of Education, Religion, Culture and Sports (since June 2012), while it is now the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (2013).

<sup>4</sup> With the Law 3966/ 2011, the Pedagogical Institute (PI) has been abolished while the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) established to operate as an executive scientific body which supports the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, through its scientific research and studies on primary and secondary education issues. The author retains this name as the Greek research participants used the PI acronym.

organizations, and supervising the coordination of local school advisors. (Eurydice 2011: 1) Although measures have been taken in recent years to devolve responsibilities to the regional level, the strong centralisation of policy and decision-making remains a typical feature in the Greek educational system. As the principal is the main figure in this research, a scrutiny of policy documents on the principal's role at an institutional level is highlighted in this chapter. The following discussion is tied to the documentary analysis of government policy in the Greek case study reports (see chapters six and seven).

### *The principal's role in a secondary school*

Within the framework of educational legislation (Law 1566/85), the school management consists of the school principal, assistant principals and the teachers' association. Access to management positions in secondary education is open to qualified teachers, who are centrally appointed, to perform administrative tasks.

Among the main duties of the principal, are:

- the administrative work of the school, its supervision and smooth functioning; the observance of the education laws, presidential decrees and the implementation of the educational policies;
- the evaluation of the teacher's role, their co-operation with them and collaboration with the subject advisers;
- the care and problem solving of the students, and the relationships with the local authority and parents.

The headteacher has no influence on teaching staff appointments<sup>5</sup>, as this is the responsibility of the central authority in Greece.

The Educational Law 1566/85 and the Ministerial Decision 353.1/324/105657/Δ1/2002 (FEK 1340B/16-10-2002) policy documents show some aspects of an instructional role for headteachers, through guiding the school community to set high goals, coordinating curriculum, constructing the school's timetable, guiding teachers pedagogically and supporting them to take pedagogical initiatives, ensuring teacher training within their subject area and in respect of pedagogical issues, collaborating with subject teachers to help newly appointed teachers in their teaching, co-ordinating and leading teachers' activities, encouraging teachers' initiatives and being involved in evaluating teachers' performance.

School improvement is linked to the headteacher's (Educational Law 1566/85) and subject advisers' (Educational Law 1304/92 and 2525/97) instructional role, as implied by the Law, defining their pedagogical-oriented role at school level. However, the Greek literature (see chapter two) sheds light on the narrow scope for school improvement, but this author's thesis suggests that there is some discretion by Greek principals and teaching staff regarding implementation of government policy in practice.

### *Recent policy initiatives regarding leadership, teaching and learning*

At turbulent times in the Greek sociopolitical context, improving teaching

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<sup>5</sup> The teaching staff appointment process in state sector in Greece is determined by competitive examination at national level, administered by Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP).

quality and strengthening school leadership were two major aspects of the ‘New School’ proposed reform agenda. The ‘New School- the student first’ policy, for primary and secondary education (2010), introduced significant changes with the intention of restructuring educational administration, strengthening school leadership and making schools centres for creative learning, as an important pathway towards a more student-centred school. In a bid to improve the efficiency and quality of the Greek education system, in 2010, the Education Minister unveiled this ambitious plan (‘New School’) calling for a radical change in the curriculum to discourage learning by rote and envisioning a future which includes digitized classrooms, less homework, offering better ways of knowledge assimilation through introducing a ‘flexible curricula, streamlined teaching modules, established a certificate of pedagogic competence for teachers and evaluations for teachers and schools.’ (OECD, 2012: 80) However, this policy introduction is mainly linked to administrative modifications, in contrast to their ambitious intention to be conceived as a pedagogical reform, while the structure follows strong bureaucratic practices.

### **Significance of a Focus on High-Performing Secondary Schools (HPSS)**

Exploring instructional leadership practices in high-performing secondary schools, a topic which is under-researched (see chapter two), has the potential to create evidence-based guidance on the relationship between instructional leadership and school improvement. The focus on high-performing schools arises from an assumption that they are likely to exemplify good practice and



provide fertile contexts for understanding how learning-centred leadership leads to enhanced student outcomes.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

The chapters in this thesis collectively provide an understanding of instructional leadership, as discussed in the international literature, and its application in high performing schools in England and Greece. The thesis does this through nine chapters.

This chapter (chapter one) includes a discussion of the aims and research questions and also considers the significance of conducting comparative research. It also discusses the policy context in both England and Greece. Chapter two reviews the literature, leading to the conceptual framework of this study. The empirical review gave the opportunity for the researcher to explore IL aspects from an international perspective. Chapter three sets the methodological context of the study in which the adopted research paradigm is discussed, along with establishing the methodological conditions for enhancing research validity and reliability, together with significant issues of the comparative framework of analysis. Chapters four to seven comprise the case study reports, which explore in depth how IL is conceived in four different research contexts, while also providing the first stage of analysis.

Chapter eight deals with the next stage of analysis, which delves deeper into the common and differentiated themes in the two countries. The cross case analysis

of the findings in relation to the empirical literature provides an understanding of contextually bounded IL. The cross-country research findings are interwoven for constructing the answers to the research question, which are presented in the final chapter. Chapter nine also discusses the empirical and theoretical significance of the research, leading to a grounded theory IL model in centralised contexts.

## **Overview**

This chapter discusses policy frameworks in Greece and England, a centralised and a partially decentralised educational system, and, the conceptual and methodological background in order to allow the author to conduct cross-country comparative research.

The research questions are underpinned by a rationale leading to a comparative approach to instructional leadership. The research questions address a range of issues (e.g. student results, teachers' performance, school improvement) providing the basis for an in-depth exploration. The study is focused on cross-country comparative research in high performing secondary schools.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical literature related to instructional leadership, with the purpose of establishing the knowledge base underpinning the research questions of this study. The nature of this comparative research study led the researcher to search on databases in both languages, English and Greek:

- books via the Warwick University Library Web Catalogue;
- research articles and theses using mainly the following electronic databases: Ebsco, Ingenta Connect, ERIC, Emerald, Web of Knowledge, JSTOR, Science Direct and Ethos E-Theses online;
- articles available from the NCSL archive;
- the electronic database of the Pedagogical Institute; and,
- the Greek digital libraries and institutional repositories HEAL Link and openarchives.gr: ESTIA- Harokopio University, Pandemos- Panteion University, Psepheda- University of Macedonia, Nemertes- University of Patras.

The main concepts linked to this research are instructional leadership, leadership for/of learning, pedagogic leadership, educational leadership, learning-centred leadership, managing teaching and learning. Other search terms used were: leadership in high performing/outstanding schools, management and leadership in secondary education in England and/or Greece, leadership for school improvement, cross-cultural/ comparative educational leadership and management.

This chapter is organised in seven sections. The first section challenges the gaps in the literature and sets the current study within the two diverse research contexts, while the second section considers historical perspectives on IL, concluding with it regaining significance after the millennium. The theoretical perspectives on instructional leadership (section three), and the emerging critiques of the model (section four), influenced the development of a conceptual framework for the research (section five). The main body of this chapter (section six) discusses international empirical evidence. The international overviews, alongside the evidence from Europe, England and Greece, encouraged the researcher to extensively review the IL dimensions critical to this study, within a thematic theoretical and empirical exploration in diverse educational contexts (section seven). In view of the issues raised by the research questions, the relevant themes are examined while the interaction of the themes is guided by the two main research questions:

- *What is the nature of instructional leadership in English high-performing secondary schools?*
- *What is the nature of instructional leadership in Greek high-performing secondary schools?*

The structure of this chapter moves away from conventional ways of reviewing the literature, in terms of its breadth (international perspectives), depth (systematic critical assessment) and nature of synthesising the components of IL (following a consistent thematic approach).

## **Gaps in the Literature**

A comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical literature in different international contexts showed that the nexus between classroom practice and leadership impacts student learning (e.g. Lee and Dimmock, 1999; Mulford and Silins, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2006a; Day et al., 2007b; Day et al., 2008; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Robinson et al., 2008; Bush and Glover, 2009; Dempster and Bagakis, 2009; Bush et al., 2010; Hallinger and Heck, 2011). However, the existing literature shows that instructional leadership has been widely researched in the USA but less widely explored in the United Kingdom and barely considered in Greece, demonstrating, also, the lack of a comparative framework in English and Greek high performing secondary schools.

As Dimmock and Walker (2000a: 147) suggest, ‘a comparative approach to educational leadership and management can expose the value of theory and practice from different cultural perspectives which may then, in turn, inform and influence existing dominant Western paradigms.’ The latter point highlights the significance of an exploration within a comparative context, which significantly led the researcher to look at this leadership model within outstanding schools with the purpose of making this study an asset to cross-country comparative study literature. The researcher’s literature search indicates that her study is original in its focus on state high-performing secondary schools and the relationship between instructional leadership and school improvement within a cross-country comparative context.

## **Historical Perspectives on Instructional Leadership**

Studies undertaken in the late 1970s, and the early 1980s, of schools in poor US urban communities, where students succeeded regardless of their socio-economic background due to the strong instructional leadership presence in these schools (e.g. Edmonds, 1979), led to the development of American instructional leadership theory. Edmond's research (1979) unequivocally highlighted the central role of principals in educational improvement in instructionally-effective schools within which strong administrative leadership was evident. In the early 1980s in the USA, the growing interest in instructional leadership was related to the effective schools movement (1966-1986) (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982; Barth, 1986; Hallinger and Murphy, 1986b; Cuban, 1988; Krug, 1992) where the establishment of a normatively prominent instructional principal role was inevitable (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1988; Hallinger and Wimpelberg, 1992; Hallinger and Heck, 1996), while, in the 1990s in the UK, an extensive literature was developed to describe management and leadership practices performed by principals in effective schools.

In reference to the emergence of leadership terms such as 'distributed leadership' and 'transformational leadership' in the 1990s, Hallinger (2003: 330) perceptively states that '[this] indicated a broader dissatisfaction with the instructional leadership model, which many believed focused too much on the principal as the centre of expertise, power and authority'. During that period, interest in the impact of instructional leadership on student academic outcomes remained overwhelmingly centered on primary instructionally effective schools (e.g. Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). Turning to the

millennium, the policy makers' focus on the improvement of teaching and learning gave rise to increasing interest in instructional leadership (e.g. Day et al., 2001; Southworth, 2002; Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger (2005) highlights that instructional leadership was the most fashionable researched model of school leadership by 2005.

## **Theoretical Perspectives on Instructional Leadership**

### Terms within different research contexts

The concept of instructional leadership has evolved over time and the American literature refers to *instructional leadership* (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Heck et al., 1990; Krug, 1992; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 1999; Elmore, 2000; Blase and Blase, 1998, 1999a,b, 2002, 2004; Hallinger, 2003; Marks and Printy, 2003; Hallinger, 2005; Coldren and Spillane, 2007), and *instructionally focused leadership* or *leadership for school improvement* (Murphy et al., 2007). Moreover, the term 'instructional leadership' has been replaced by the term *learning-focused leadership* in Knapp et al.'s (2006) research conducted in the US context. Within the English literature, the term *instructional leadership* (Southworth, 2002; Hopkins, undated) was superseded by *Leadership for/of Learning* (Bush et al., 2006; Murphy et al., 2007; Dempster and Macbeath, 2009; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2010). The term *learning-centred leadership* is also used within the English (Southworth, 2003) and the New Zealand (Timperley, 2006) contexts.

As Hallinger (2009:1) notes, 'instructional leadership has recently reincarnated as a global phenomenon in the form of "leadership for learning" ', which is

conceived as a more distributed and/or shared school leadership paradigm for 21<sup>st</sup> century school contexts. As a consequence, in his most recent works (Hallinger, 2009; 2011a; Hallinger & Heck, 2010b), the term *Leadership for Learning* is used, as being the model of leadership for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. Scholars (Bush et al., 2008, 2010; Bush and Glover, 2009; Hoadley, 2009), exploring the empirical knowledge base underlying the concept of instructional leadership, use the term *Managing Teaching and Learning* within the South African context; and *curriculum leadership and management* within Asian (Lee and Dimmock, 1999) and Australian (Dimmock and Wildy, 1995) contexts.

### Definitions

There is still no agreed definition on instructional leadership, one of the ten leadership models discussed by Bush (2011: 36). However, the lack of consensus on definitions on instructional leadership did not deter various researchers from having agreed on a list of practices encompassed in this model, as discussed in the next section of this chapter. North American literature, the birthplace of this leadership model, uses the term ‘instruction’ as the synonym of ‘pedagogy’<sup>6</sup>. However, MacNeill et al. (2003: 16) have argued that:

the principles and practices of instructional leadership are potentially dysfunctional in terms of genuine and sustainable improvement of student learning [whereas] [...] pedagogic leadership concerns leading improvement of student learning and this requires facilitating the professional learning of teachers.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Pedagogy’ which is rooted from the ancient Greek verb *paidagogeō*, literally means *to lead the child*. For the Ancient Greeks and Romans a ‘pedagogos’ was an educated servant responsible of taking care of children from rich families and the one who guided the children from home to school. Later, the term was given the meaning of ‘bring up, educate, guide’. (Krivas, 1999: 40)



Instructional leadership has been identified as one of the most significant leadership conceptions in English speaking countries (UK, North America, Australia, New Zealand). Several empirical studies (e.g. Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Hallinger and Heck, 1997; Blase and Blase, 2002; Southworth, 2002; Motshana, 2004; Ali and Botha, 2006; Timperley, 2006; Day et al., 2007b; Pansiri, 2008; Bush and Glover, 2009; Bush et al., 2010) reinforce that instructional leadership is highly concerned with the ‘technical core of education’, teaching and learning, where the focus is leading teachers’ professional learning to improve student outcomes. For example, Southworth (2002: 79) states that ‘instructional leadership is strongly concerned with teaching and learning, including the professional learning of teachers as well as student growth’, incorporating a number of practices that explore the relationship between principal leadership and pupil achievements. This is in line with Elmore’s (2000) definition which takes teaching improvement as a focus with a view to improve learner outcomes.

The lack of explicit descriptions and definitions of this term led Leithwood et al. (1999: 8) to correctly argue that ‘instructional leadership [...] typically assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students.’ For Bush and Glover (2002: 10), while the focus is clearly on teachers’ behaviours in improving learning, the emphasis remains on the conceptual definition of the centrality of teaching and learning and they contend that ‘leaders’ influence is targeted at student learning via teachers.’ This definition parallels Hallinger and Heck’s (1997) classification of principal effects, Leithwood et al.’s (1999)

emphasis on teachers' behaviours directly affecting students' growth, and Southworth's (2002) development of strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They all highlight an indirect effect of principal leadership on student achievement through professional collaboration and learning, as discussed throughout the chapter.

### Alternative concepts to instructional leadership

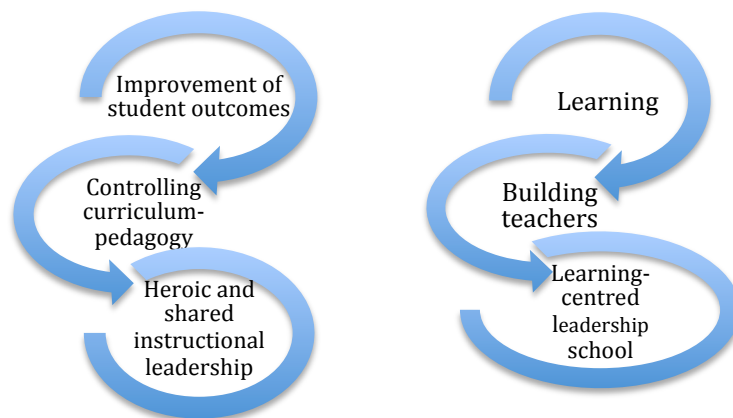
The terms 'instructional leadership', 'learning-centred leadership' and 'Leadership for Learning' typically serve as alternative concepts. Instructional leadership has been characterised by some scholars (Barth, 1990; Day et al., 2001) as a 'top-down approach with an emphasis on controlling others to move towards goals that may have been set at the top of the organization for the pursuit of the goal of school improvement.' (Hallinger, 2003: 343) While earlier accounts emphasized a solo model of instructional leadership, more recent models have recognized the need for multiple layers of leadership and the need for shared instructional leadership practices (e.g. Marks and Printy, 2003). The trend towards a more shared sense of instructional leadership supersedes the top-down (principal) instructional leadership model of the 1980s, while a 'shared' (Marks and Printy, 2003) form of instructional leadership describes the creation of an environment for building staff instructional and leadership capabilities to improve student learning.

## *Learning-centred leadership*

Dimmock (2012: 78) states that '[he] fashioned the term 'learning-centred leadership'<sup>7</sup> to capture the shift from a narrower to a broader set of leadership concerns'. MacBeath (2006: 39) agrees with Southworth (2003: 9) that:

[a] change [in] the title for this particular form of leadership [is needed], because instruction is no longer our guiding star; rather it is learning. If learning is our primary goal, then we should think of leadership being "learning centred" rather than instructional [...].

Conceptualising the preferred 21<sup>st</sup> century term of learning-centred leadership, with the goal of finding common ground with instructional leadership, a number of common threads can be discerned (See Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1:** *Instructional leadership vs learning-centred leadership chain*

Whereas the centrality of the relationship between instructional leadership and outcomes, as shown in the IL chain on the left of Figure 2.1, has been established through controlling the pedagogical quality of instructors, within learning centred leadership 'leaders encourage teachers to examine their teaching through the lens of learning.' (Southworth, 2004b: 111) However, the

<sup>7</sup> Dimmock, C. (2000) *Designing the learning-centred school: a cross-cultural perspective*, London: The Falmer Press.

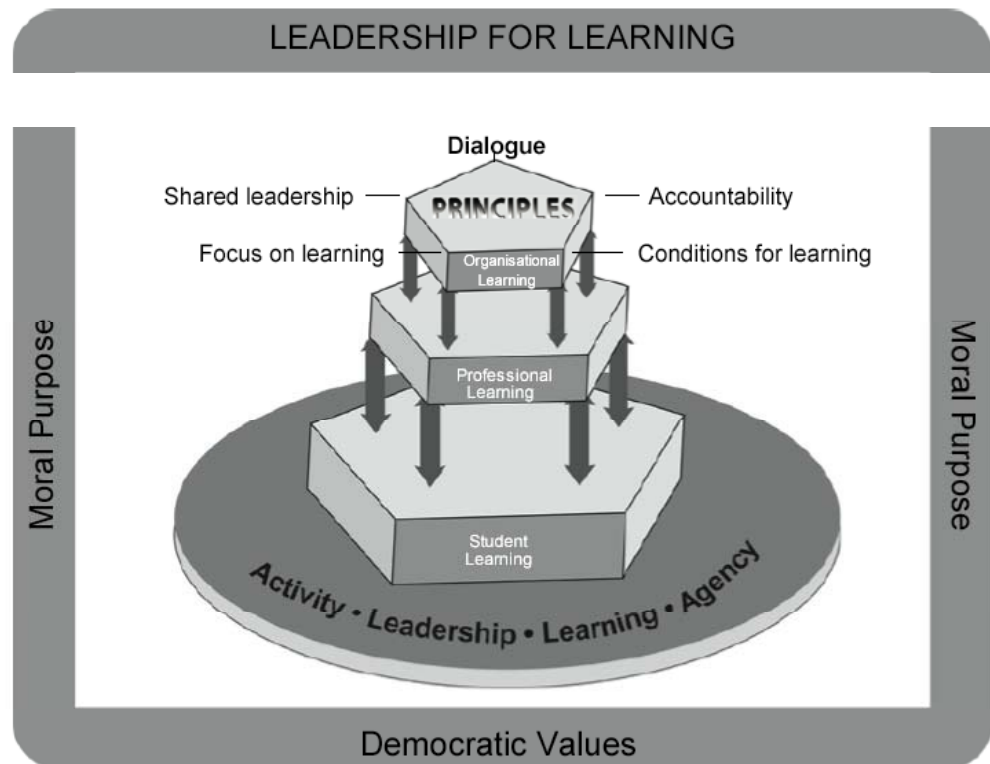
main foci of the two concepts - instructional leadership and learning-centred leadership – are teaching and learning, respectively.

### *Leadership for Learning*

Hallinger (2009) states that a new paradigm for 21st century school leadership is the reincarnation of instructional leadership in the form of leadership for learning (LfL). MacBeath and Dempster (2009) argue that there is no firm definition of ‘leadership for learning’ as its usage is influenced by the educational organization context, at a national and international level. However, a developing understanding of leadership for learning has been highlighted by Swaffield and MacBeath (2009a), based on the outcomes of the ‘Leadership for Learning Project’ (2002-2005), to be discussed later in this chapter. Figure 2.2 shows how they remodeled the ‘wedding cake’, based on ‘Knapp et al.’s<sup>8</sup> representation of layers of learning (2003) [...] as an attempt to capture the complexity and dynamism of the principles in a way that is accessible to a wide range of potential users.’ (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009a: 16)

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<sup>8</sup> Knapp, M., Copland, M. and Talbert, J. (2003) *Leading for Learning: Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders*, Washington: Centre for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington. ([www.crpweb.org](http://www.crpweb.org))



**Figure 2.2:** *Leadership for Learning – an integrative model*

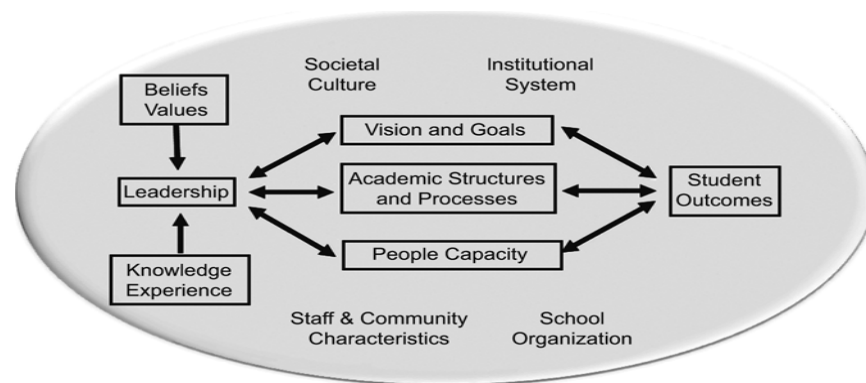
(Source: [http://www.leadershipforlearning.org.uk/images/LFL/lfl\\_diagram\\_and\\_principles.pdf](http://www.leadershipforlearning.org.uk/images/LFL/lfl_diagram_and_principles.pdf))

Accordingly, this set of principles provides a framework of capacity building for the interconnection of leadership and learning, as described below:

- A focus on learning as an activity in which everyone is a learner learning [...].
- Conditions for learning as an activity in which culture nurtures the learning of everyone, physical and social spaces stimulate and celebrate learning [...].
- Explicit dialogue about leadership for learning in which there is active collegial inquiry focusing on the sharing of values, understandings and practices.

- Sharing leadership in which structures support participation in developing the schools as a learning community [...] is symbolized in the day-to-day flow of activities in the school [.]
- A shared sense of accountability in which a systematic approach to self-evaluation is embedded at classroom, school and community levels [...]. (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009b: 14-15)

Various researchers (Hallinger, 2003; Mulford and Silins, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006b, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008) show that leadership for learning describes practices that school leaders employ with the purpose of enhancing learning, while Hallinger's (2011a) conceptualization of the LfL model (Figure 2.3) subsumes features of instructional, transformational and shared leadership (e.g. Marks and Printy, 2003; MacBeath et al., 2005; Hallinger and Heck, 2010b).



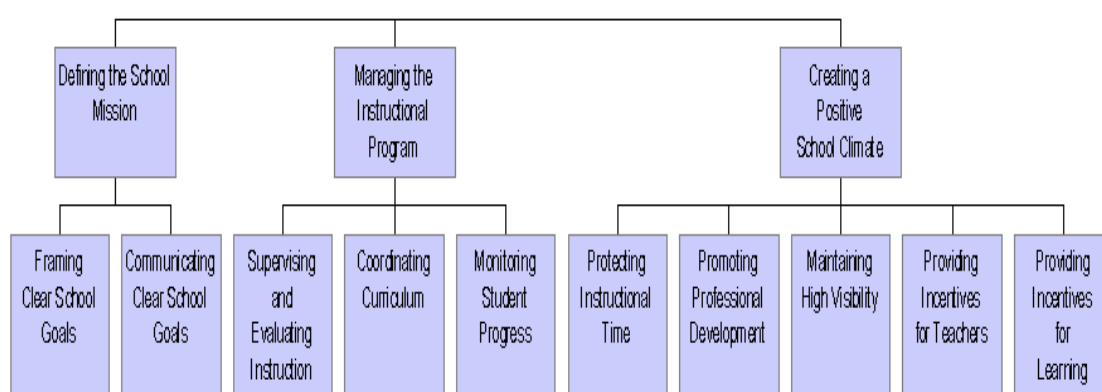
**Figure 2.3:** *A synthesized model of leadership for learning (Hallinger 2011a: 127)*

The synthesized model identifies the indirect means which affect the leadership contribution to school improvement through which leadership is linked to learning. Two important studies (Robinson et al., 2008; Hallinger and Heck,

2010b) show a ‘mediated-effects model’ of principal or/and collective leadership and learning, as seen in the empirical section of this chapter.

## Models of Instructional Leadership

Hallinger and Murphy’s (1985) model of principal instructional leadership has been claimed by Hallinger (2008) to be the most frequently tested model. As Figure 2.4 shows, the model consists of three general dimensions of leadership practice, while incorporating ten specific functions.



**Figure 2.4:** *Instructional management framework (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985)*

In this model, the three important dimensions of the principal’s role as instructional manager are:

- Defining the school mission in terms of students’ learning.

However, two decades later, literature suggests that instructional leaders were viewed as goal oriented professionals and culture builders creating an ‘academic press’, through the development of high expectations and standards for students

and teachers, primarily focused on improving student outcomes (Hallinger, 2005: 223).

- Managing the instructional programme requires the principal's direct engagement with teachers in curriculum and leads to the assumption that the principal has the teaching and learning expertise for this engagement.
- Promoting the school climate, by encompassing principal's behaviours which mostly consist of indirect activities, including providing incentives for learning. (Hallinger, 2010)

As described throughout the thesis, there is ample support for the development of a continuous improvement culture in instructionally effective schools.

#### Strategies enhancing teaching and learning

Southworth (2002) revealed the three strategies which enhance teaching and learning improvement, as follows:

- Modeling
- Monitoring
- Professional dialogue and discussion.

Blase and Blase's (e.g. 1999b, 2004) studies in the USA offer a similar view, stressing that successful instructional leaders encourage the conditions that constitute professional learning communities by empowering teachers to foster professional growth through collaboration and promoting reflection (dialogues)



with peers about their instruction. Hallinger and Heck (1999), showed the three different ways of principal's influence on teaching and learning, suggesting:

1. *Direct effects*- Where the principal's leadership impacts on student outcomes.
2. *Mediated Effects*- Where the principal's actions which affect outcomes are channeled through other variables.
3. *Reciprocal effects*- Where a mutual influence between teachers and principals actions affect the outcomes. (ibid: 178-190)

Reviewing the above classification, Southworth (2002: 78) notes that the lack of attention to other factors creates a simplistic view of headteacher action and influence and may sustain more heroic notions of leadership. Hallinger and Heck's (1999) work suggests that the school principal's effect on outcomes is more likely to be mediated through other people. This broader conceptualization, enhancing group dynamics in the micro-politics of a school context, seems to lead to effective instructional leadership.

## **Critiques of Instructional Leadership**

While instructional leadership is widely advocated, there are also several criticisms of this approach, regarding conceptual and practical limitations, as discussed by Hallinger (2010). These critiques have led to the alternative concept of leadership for learning, which has several different features (see Figure 2.5):

OVERLAPPING THEMES					
<b>Critiques of IL</b>	• 'One size fits all' Model	• Principal IL	• Student Outcomes	• Top- down Learning	• Limited viability of principal's functions for sustainable learning
<b>LfL vs IL</b>	• Contextualised Leadership	• Shared IL	• School Community Learning	• Bottom-up Learning	• Approaches related to systemic change for enhancing sustainability

**Figure 2.5:** *Overlapping themes on critiques of IL and differences of LfL and IL*

The critiques of IL may be summarised as:

- the 'one size fits all' model of instructional leadership
- the focus on principal's instructional leadership
  - the PIMRS focus on the principal's instructional management behaviour
  - the principal's single dimensional role
- the exclusion of contextual factors in the PIMRS focus
- the dominance of the primary school context
- the relationship between IL and improving core subjects
- IL focuses on student outcomes rather than school community learning
- IL focuses on the direction rather than the process of leadership
- Limitations of principal's instructional leadership functions for sustainable learning

#### The 'one size fits all' model of instructional leadership

A central criticism of instructional leadership is its 'one size fits all' model applied to aspiring and practicing principals at leadership development programmes in the mid 1980s USA (Hallinger, 2010: 63). The main point of critics' arguments (e.g. Barth, 1986; Hallinger and Wimpelberg, 1992) is the unrealistic expectation of principals 'to fulfill this normative model of school

leadership.’ (Hallinger, 2009: 4) The unsuitability of the ‘one size fits all’ framework is increased due to the multiple constraints faced by leaders across different schools related to school-based characteristics, such as school size, resources, and student needs. This links to the importance of contextualizing instructional leadership practices to the school’s specific needs (Hallinger, 2009:16; Hallinger, 2010: 72). This may also be seen as a major difference between leadership for learning and instructional leadership.

#### The focus on principal’s instructional leadership

This has two dimensions:

##### *The PIMRS focus on the principal’s instructional management behaviour*

The criticisms of the assumption of instructional leadership as the core business of the principal are also reinforced by discussion of the instructional leadership measurement instrument, Principals’ Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Focusing only on principals’ instructional management behaviour limits the extent to which the power of instructional leadership practices is shared or distributed, and overlooks other school leaders’ instructional management role. The exclusion of school staff contribution to instructional leadership functions reinforces a heroic view of the principal that is prominent in Hallinger’s (1992) study.

However, Barth’s (1986) critique on the limitations of cultivating principals’ instructional leadership development within a school environment is developing the expectation of creating a community of learners (ibid, 1990). Linked to the critique of ‘solo instructional leadership’, studies began to focus on shared

instructional leadership (e.g. Marks and Printy, 2003) in the millennium. The emergence of a collaborative orientation has arisen in an era that may signal the decentralization of the principal's role. Whilst this establishes shared leadership engagement, where stakeholders with the requisite expertise have a role in forging effective leadership development within the school context, a re-conceptualization of the term was required, by replacing the hierarchical notion of instructional leadership with a shared perspective. LfL addresses this criticism because it 'incorporates the notion of shared instructional leadership whereas the concept of instructional leadership was mainly focused on the principal.' (Hallinger, 2009: 16; Hallinger, 2010: 72) Rhodes and Brundrett (2010: 169) add that:

Leadership for learning is a broader concept and has greater potential to impact on school and student outcomes, as it incorporates a wider spectrum of leadership action to support learning and learning outcomes. Suggesting a collaborative approach within a learning culture where bottom-up initiatives are encouraged, innovation is fostered and joint responses are enabled, leadership for learning foster the engagement of the school community via leadership distribution.

### *The principal's single dimensional role*

Conceptualising the principal's predominant role as the instructional leader of the school (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Bamburg and Andrews, 1990) also has its critics. This is associated with the argument about the dysfunctional consequences (Cuban, 1988) of the principals' single-dimensional role which challenges the desired perception of principals adopting instructional leadership as their normatively major role with the purpose to improve students' performance (Barth, 1986). However, the leadership for learning alternative creates the space for more shared learning-focused processes to take place, while

the whole school community, not only those in official roles, may execute activities which support students and teachers' learning paths.

#### The exclusion of contextual factors in PIMRS focus

The PIMRS questionnaire (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985) has also been criticized for its lack of attention to contextual factors, such as school type, size, gender and age, which influence the degree to which respondents adopt instructional management functions. (Krug, 1992) However, school context is explored in Hallinger and Murphy's (1986a) study, which shows that direct involvement in teaching and learning is unrealistic in large schools while principals cannot devote a substantial amount of time in classrooms dealing with instruction. Hallinger (2003: 333) also comments that research reveals a wealth of findings concerning 'instructional leadership behaviour (school level, school size, school SES), and the effects of the school context on instructional leadership (e.g., gender, training, experience) [...].'

#### The dominance of the primary school context

The birthplace of instructional leadership is in the 'instructional effective elementary school' (Edmonds, 1979) and there are few published empirical studies before the millennium (e.g. Cuban, 1988; Lee and Dimmock, 1999). A significant interest has emerged at the first decade of the millennium (e.g. MacBeath et al., 2005; OECD, 2005; 2009; Day et al, 2007b) highlighting aspects of instructional leadership in secondary schools. The most common point within this vein of critique is the challenge of instructional supervision by secondary school principals while having less subject expertise than the teachers

they are supervising. This view emanates from considerable research (e.g. Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1988; Southworth, 2002; Supovitz, 2008) which shows that subject area specialisation in secondary schools may constrain the principal's instructional leadership influence. This is in line with Hallinger's statement (1992: 42) about principals' lack of specific subject knowledge:

[...] implicit in the instructional leadership literature is the notion that principals must have the knowledge of curriculum and instruction necessary for improvement interventions. This assumption has, however, seldom been supported in reality, particularly in secondary schools.

'The practice of instructional leadership requires substantial adaptation in secondary schools, which are often larger and more complex organizations', as Hallinger (2005: 231) states. This criticism may have led to a shift towards principals' interactive and shared instructional leadership capacity.

#### The relationship between IL and improving core subjects

Another important critique of instructional leadership is related to the perception that instructional leadership is preoccupied solely with improving students' literacy and numeracy. Prominent educational researchers such as Fullan (2001) and Bush (2011) argue that this is a narrow conception of the school principal's role, as school leadership is more than improving the core subjects (literacy and numeracy). The latter highlights that this is a major weakness:

It underestimates the other important purposes of education, including pupil welfare, socialization and the process of developing young people into responsible adults. It also de-emphasizes the less academic aspects of education, including sport, drama and music. (Bush, 2011:201)

### IL focuses on student outcomes rather than school community learning

Instructional leadership is focused on improving student learning, while LfL:

embraces a much wider, developmental view of learning [whereas much of the instructional leadership literature reduces learning to ‘outcomes’<sup>9</sup>]. It sees things through a wide angle lens, embracing professional, organizational and leadership learning. [...] Its concern is for all of those who are part of a learning community [and for that reason learning is portrayed as an activity for everyone]. (MacBeath and Townsend, 2011b: 1246)

This argument also reveals the substantial differences between the terms IL and LfL with a different focus on the measurement of learning and the different perceptions of school leadership focus, highlighting the creation of a learning community and teacher leadership within a LfL perspective. Burton and Brundrett (2005) add that a new architecture of the learning theory strengthens all school stakeholders’ learning capabilities to benefit outcomes, where bottom-up learning within leadership for learning contrasts with instructional leadership’s top-down approaches.

### IL focuses on the direction rather than the process of leadership

Bush and Glover (2003b: 12) criticise the model of instructional leadership in respect of the narrow nature of the process of influence, by stating that ‘[i]t focuses on the *direction* of influence, rather than its nature and source.’ Hallinger (1992: 37-38) offers a similar critique:

[...] a persisting weakness of this literature shows ‘the inability of the effective schools studies to document the processes by which leaders helped their schools to become instructionally effective.

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<sup>9</sup> In the original text, the sentence in the brackets was preceding the sentence in the quote.

This statement reinforces Bush (2011: 201) comment that the focus of instructional leadership is ‘on the ‘what’ rather than the ‘how’ of educational leadership. In this respect, it is a limited and partial model.’

### Limitations of principal’s instructional leadership functions for sustainable learning

The conception of principal’s instructional leadership ‘is ill-suited to long-term needs for institutional development in schools’ (Hallinger, 1992: 39) while the viability of this role is questioned within a changing environment of professional practice. This critique is in line with Hallinger’s (2009: 16) argument on LfL’s different mixture of models (instructional leadership and transformational model), which ‘can be viewed as a process of mutual influence in which leadership is but one key factor in a process of systemic change [...]’. Similarly, Rhodes and Brundrett (2010: 159) contend that:

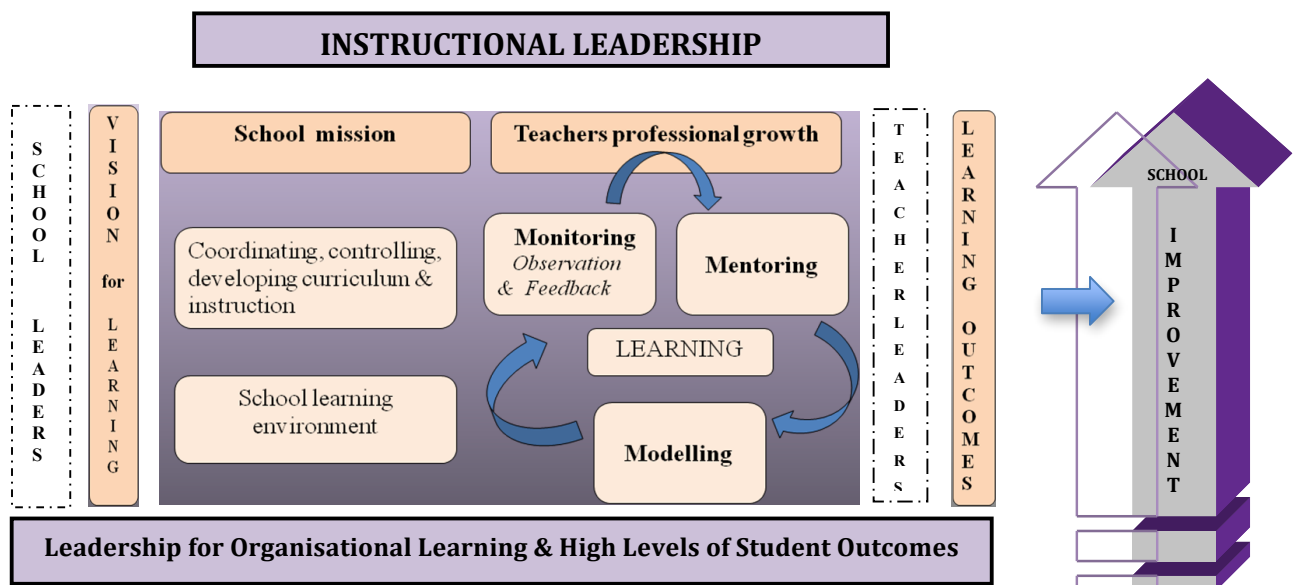
Leadership for learning may therefore be seen as subsuming and advancing the goals of instructional leadership by adopting learning-centred leadership approaches capable of finding positive and potent expression within the experience of all learners. Such leadership requires the establishment of both structural and cultural support to enable the necessary capacity to address the changes needed within the contexts, communities and intended futures within which these improvements are pursued, in order to build sustainable organizational and inter-organisational learning environments.

The whole nexus of critique on instructional leadership illuminates that the concept of instructional leadership should not be equated with leadership for learning as they have a different focus on how learning is conceptualized. The critiques helped to tighten the linkage of teaching, learning and leadership, while the alternative notion is now in the ascendancy, morphed into LfL ‘reincarnated’ (Hallinger, 2009: 1) form.



## Conceptual Framework

The framework informing this doctoral research is instructional leadership, which involves a number of activities and practices that create an effective principal- teacher interaction with the intention to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The limitations associated with the structural and cultural framework of the Greek school context encouraged the researcher to adopt IL, a non-facilitative nature of leadership as her lead model, whereas LfL tends to have a more collaborative and shared sense within the learning community in order ‘to serve the organization in its endeavours to change, improve and further support student learning outcomes.’ (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2010: 157).



**Figure 2.6:** *Conceptual framework of instructional leadership*

[Adapted from Hallinger & Murphy (1985), Hallinger and Heck (1997), Southworth (2002) and Blase and Blase (1998)]

Figure 2.6 illustrates the conceptual framework that shapes this study by linking concepts and theories arising from instructional leadership research. The diagram,

which consists of three columns (the far left, the middle and the far right), act as a quasi-activity model. On the left side of the model, as shown in two columns, the school leaders are the figures who facilitate the creation of a school vision reflecting high standards of learning. The middle part which is further divided into two columns, school mission and teacher's professional growth, constitutes the knowledge base of instructional leadership captured under practices that affect learning. The column indicating 'school mission' shows Hallinger & Murphy's (1985) three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct, while, the right side of the middle part shows Southworth's (2002) three strategies which are powerful in influencing teacher's practice within learning-centred leadership: modelling, monitoring, and dialogue. The collective work of these researchers led to the conceptualisation of instructional leadership as encompassing the following dimensions:

- Vision for Learning
- Curriculum management
- Evaluation of students results for a systematic monitoring of student progress
- Monitoring teachers' performance
- Mentoring and coaching
- Modelling
- Continuing professional development.

Moving towards the third part of the diagram, the researcher was influenced by Rhodes and Brundrett (2010: 156), who point out that '[b]ecause teachers are leaders of teaching and learning in classrooms, senior leaders need to help

teachers to improve their own practices by enabling teachers to continue to learn themselves'. The researcher added the notion of teacher leaders.

Within this instructional perspective, learning refers to student progress and teachers' growth, while the leaders' contribution, via teachers' professional learning, is a hallmark of school improvement. This diagram indicates a journey of instructional leadership that flows from the left to the right, where school improvement is the outcome of the teaching and learning process. The contribution of leadership to school improvement is widely acknowledged and the research literature shows that high quality academic and/or professional learning requires an instructional leadership orientation (e.g. Leithwood et al., 2006; Huber et al., 2007; Hallinger and Heck, 2010b; Sammons et al., 2011). Unraveling the theoretical and practical notions of the researched model, learning is the central focus of school leadership in high-performing schools (e.g. Murphy et al., 2007) and this justifies why instructional leadership is thought to be of central importance in the schools that have been recognized as outstanding. This statement inspired the researcher to explore in depth the 'how' of instructional leadership in outstanding schools.

## **Empirical Perspectives on Instructional Leadership**

This section ties together a rich literature, mainly within the secondary education context in Europe, because the author's focus is on two European countries (England and Greece), while an international picture is framed through an overview of international programmes. The empirical knowledge base began

with the American body of literature, as noted earlier, because instructional leadership became the dominant paradigm for educational administration and leadership in the USA in the 1980s. In contrast, there is only limited interest in instructional leadership in Europe, Asia, Australia and Africa.

### International overviews

#### *The International Leadership for Learning Project*

The international Leadership for Learning (Carpe Vitam) Project (2002-2005), exploring the relationship between leadership and learning within 24 different schools and policy contexts, through the use of quantitative and qualitative data, led to five principles for practice (see pp. 29-30). Significant policy changes were common features among the countries involved in the project.

In the UK and the US, the project was set within the growing Bush-Blair alliance, the advent of the “No Child Left Behind” legislation in the States and the creation of a National College of School Leadership in England [which promoted learning-centred leadership (NCSL, 2004)], while in Greece the election of a centre-left coalition was greeted by school staff with a sigh of relief. (MacBeath, 2006: 34)

Instructional leadership emerged as a generic term for some of the project researchers. However, ‘in the American context [the term instruction which predisposes people to think in terms of teaching rather than learning] hampered people’s ability to focus on learning and the learner.’ (MacBeath, 2006: 39). An interesting outcome is that leadership within the LfL framework is shared and accountable:

not by a few people in formal positions of power controlling and directing many others, but by actions taken by all members of a community in the everyday flow of activity. Everyone exercises leadership at some point, viewing it as a right and responsibility, not the corollary of a particular

position, nor a gift or burden bestowed by someone in a high status role.  
(MacBeath and Swaffield, 2008: 1)

Although cultural differences may lead to diverse findings, the LfL project showed some common ground about leadership, learning and their interrelationship, while the findings of English and Greek schools participating in the Carpe Vitam LfL project are discussed separately in each country's section.

### *OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)*

The first Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), conducted by the OECD (2009a) in 23 countries in four continents, gave the opportunity to principals and secondary school teachers to identify the principals' styles and the micro-policy approaches within school management, leadership and other workplace issues, such as school resources, teaching and learning, teacher appraisal and feedback, instructional practices (e.g. evaluation of students results, monitoring teachers' performance, professional development) except for the practice of modelling (OECD, undated). Assessing the managerial behaviour of principals in secondary education, two management styles- instructional leadership and administrative leadership- are dominant. 'The two styles are not mutually exclusive [in contrast to Hallinger and Murphy's (1986b) findings] and the TALIS data demonstrate that a number of principals use both styles to a considerable degree.' (OECD, 2009a: 193)

Since the focus of the analysis was on the pattern of cross-cultural differences, rather than within country variations, the corollary is that there is significant variation in the use of leadership across TALIS countries. In only two countries -

Malta and Poland- are principals on average more involved in instructional leadership (managerial aspects of teaching such as instructional management and supervision, teacher appraisal and support of teachers' professional development), and those principals do not neglect administrative leadership. Findings revealed within-country variations, while 'even the countries with the lowest average use of instructional leadership, such as Austria, Estonia and Spain, have principals that focus on this style of management.' (OECD, 2009a: 196)



**Figure 2.7:** *Scales of instructional & administrative leadership styles in TALIS EU countries*

As Figure 2.7 shows, within central Europe, in Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia<sup>10</sup> principals tend towards an instructional style of leadership, compared to principals in Austria who are less likely to favour instructional school leadership. (OECD, 2009a<sup>11</sup>). Instructional leadership is reported as relatively strong in Poland compared with most of the other TALIS countries (OECD, 2009a<sup>12</sup>). Similarly, evidence from Malta reinforces the statement that instructional leadership prevails. What emanates from the findings is likely to be linked to the

<sup>10</sup> School principals in Slovak Republic (Slovakia) tend to combine an administrative and instructional style of school leadership, while in most of the countries one of the styles prevails (Overview of country results: Slovak Republic, p.2)

<sup>11</sup> OECD (2009a: 9) TALIS results for Austria.

<sup>12</sup> OECD (2009a: 2) TALIS results for Poland.

prevailing argument regarding the degree of centralisation and decentralisation which affects leadership. As evidenced by most TALIS principals in European systems which have a more top down decision making orientation (Bulgaria, Portugal, Ireland, Norway and Italy), centralisation within educational systems reinforces an administrative style of leadership to emerge, indicating little capacity to improve the teaching-learning processes. The OECD TALIS survey found that higher levels of instructional leadership create benefits for schools, and contextual factors largely influence the nature of school leadership.

*The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP)*

The ISSPP Project (2001) comprised a range of case studies that examined successful school principalship in different levels of education (primary to urban secondary schools) within diverse international contexts (Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and the United States). Its purpose was to examine how school leaders address and implement instructional leadership, organizational capacity building and culturally responsive practices. Establishing cross-national profiles of successful school leaders, the findings of this project indicate the complex role of principals who are responsive to schools' needs in diverse societies (NCSL, 2010). Discussion of the English findings appears throughout the chapter.

*The International Leadership Improvement for Student Achievement (LISA) project*

The international Leadership Improvement for Student Achievement (LISA) project, funded by the European Union, aimed to enhance understanding about

the relationship between school leadership (instructional, participative, personnel development style, entrepreneurial, structuring leadership styles and practices), the educational systems, and pupils' achievements in PISA and TIMSS. It showed that the most predominant leadership styles are entrepreneurial, structuring, and instructional. Although school leadership is highly contextualized at both the system and school level, 'the instructional style forms the baseline of effective school leadership across the seven European countries which participated in the LISA-project.' (LISA, 2009: 8) Among the main outcomes of this comparative project is that school leaders indirectly influence student outcomes through a range of intermediary activities, such as teacher commitment, teaching and learning practices, student expectations (ibid, 17), which 'directly influence the motivation, capabilities and working conditions of teachers who in turn shape classroom practice and student learning' (LISA, 2009: 13).

### Instructional leadership in Europe

There were few scholarly efforts to explore managing teaching and learning in Europe up to the 1980s. During the last two decades, when schools in some parts of the continent have gained greater autonomy, leadership practices have changed dramatically. Linking leadership to students' learning has been a significant feature in some European countries. However, learning-centred leadership dimensions vary across different European systems, influenced by the specific country context.



Comparing school improvement across European countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and England), through the Effective School Improvement (ESI) project, reveals the diversity of leadership conceptualisation and implementation with the purpose of fostering school improvement, as Stoll et al. (2006) point out:

[h]eadteachers in Finland are expected to exert pedagogical leadership, while the principal in The Netherlands spends most of the time on administration. In England, the headteacher's role has been diverse, including financial management and monitoring academic progress, whereas in Greece there is no leadership as such. (Stoll et al., 2002: 462)

Within the Effective School Improvement (ESI) study, Murillo's (2002) results in Spain are in line with the literature that supports the importance of principal leadership as an important factor for school improvement, and the author adds that:

[Principals' specific characteristics are under the] authoritarian [style] exercising a strong control on the school, but also [we found] pedagogical leaders, who can be considered the real [leaders] of the school [...]. (ibid: 406)

Similarly, Bolívar-Botía and Bolívar-Ruano (2011: 6) show that the Spanish principals' role remains bureaucratic, despite the European policies expectation of improving educational quality through increasing autonomy. However, it could be plausible to argue that, in an era of a major policy reforms in European educational systems, where more countries are moving towards decentralisation, the principals' role may entail a dilemma between instructional leadership and administrative-oriented leadership.

The results of a secondary analysis of an empirical comparative study among school principals in secondary education in the Netherlands, examining the

relationship between leadership and student outcomes, suggest that instructional leadership is an important characteristic of effective schools (Krüger et al., 2007: 16-17). However, the main result that ‘neither direct nor indirect effects of instructional and strategic educational leadership impact on student commitment’ (ibid: 10) contradicts other empirical studies (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a) and reviews (e.g. Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2006a; Robinson et al., 2008) which showed the indirect impact of leadership on student outcomes. Similarly, Day et al.’s (2007a) OECD case study report highlights that principals in Flemish Belgian schools are not held accountable for student performance, although:

[t]here is a growing emphasis on the principals’ responsibility to monitor and evaluate teacher performance. (ibid: 7)

The findings of the three schools show that, although it is the principal who is responsible for pedagogical leadership, in general, this leadership does not seem to be exercised. Principals have little time left for pedagogical leadership, as they are increasingly expected to exercise managerial and organisational tasks. (ibid:15) Another emergent theme is the lack of principal training, as ‘principals do not receive any kind of training fostering their skills to coach teachers in a way as to improve students’ learning outcomes.’ (ibid: 7) This contrasts with Karstanje and Webber’s (2008) exploration of programmes for school preparation in East Europe which highlighted that the model of instructional leadership used within the Bulgarian preparation programme:

[it] is quite popular and extensively researched. It is a useful model as the future school leaders have to focus on relations among the components, which makes it a strong anchoring point for improving school leadership competences. (ibid: 748)

A different picture is painted within the centralised Cypriot educational system. As part of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), Pashiardis and Savvides (2011) show how the instructional and entrepreneurial aspects of leadership interact to build the capacity for students' learning. Instructional leadership practices include providing teachers' feedback, praising exemplary work, facilitating teachers sharing ideas on teaching methods, creating the conditions for constructive critical dialogue, developing supportive or intervention strategies for students in academic need, establishing cooperative networks, and seeking professional development (Pashiardis and Savvides, 2011: 417-423). Within the Cypriot cases, the principals emphasised improving students' achievements and employed a learning-centred leadership approach to assist students' academic performance. In OECD's (2009b) review within the Portuguese context, it has been highlighted that a practice of IL- monitoring the quality of teaching and learning- may be the key element for improving teaching practices with the goal of improving Portugal's very low performance (below the OECD average) in international surveys on educational outcomes. What emerges is that 'Portugal's new approach to school management [...] will only succeed in raising educational standards if school directors exercise pedagogical leadership [...].' (ibid: 10)

A major theme from the European literature is that of internal and external stakeholders' accountability within instructional leadership. Finnish policy initiatives to raise students' achievement presupposed building upon a leadership model with a strong emphasis on teaching and learning through strong teachers' leadership within curriculum management. Teachers in Finland are given

increased autonomy:

not only to arrange teaching according to their optimal resources, but [to] allocate teaching time within the national curriculum framework differently from school to school [as they do not focus on annual exams, and establish instructional content that would best help students to reach the general goals of schooling]. This is rarely possible in more rigid and test-heavy education systems. (Sahlberg, 2007: 155)

The literature also supports the emergence of Swedish superintendents having the discretion to exert –to a greater or lesser extent- instructional leadership activities. While Rapp’s (2011: 481) study shows that the municipal school directors<sup>13</sup> in Sweden consider themselves as leaders of pedagogical activities to enhance students’ performances and the effectiveness of schools, a similar study reveals the low extent of superintendents’ contribution to activities related to instructional leadership, where their involvement in instructional vision is 14%, instructional collaboration is 17%, and, instructional support and instructional delegation, at 33%. (Bredeson and Johansson, 1997: 12). This discrepancy may be related to contextual and time effects.

## **Instructional Leadership in England**

The Education Reform Act (1988) transformed the working lives of heads and senior staff, through enhanced leadership and management responsibilities. (Bush, 2008b; Bush, 2011). This point takes us to the heart of this thesis discussion and point up the importance of increasing the leadership and management roles to improve the quality of learning, due to the changes imposed

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<sup>13</sup> The ‘director of education’ is the municipal school’s top manager. This position is somewhat comparable to the American ‘superintendent of education’, having responsibility for students’ performance and school effectiveness. (Rapp, 2011: 471-472)

on the English education system. Following the opening of the NCSL in 2000, there has been an increased focus on school leaders' engagement with activities affecting teaching and learning quality, supporting the concept of instructional leadership (NCSL, 2001) and learning-centred leadership (NCSL, 2004a). Instructional leadership was also 'one of its ten leadership propositions' (Bush and Middlewood, 2013: 16) in the NCSL Leadership Development Framework, underpinning effective learning, while stressing the critical role of headteachers in influencing the behaviour of staff to engage with activities which affect the quality of teaching and learning.

Effective headteachers provide a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. [...] They know what is going on in their classrooms. They have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of their staff [and know how to build on and reduce them, respectively]. They can focus their programme of staff development on the real needs of their staff and school [...] through a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation. [...] effective headteachers can get the best out of their staff, which is the key to influencing work in the classroom and to raising the standards achieved by pupils. (NCSL, 2001: 1)

Earley et al. (2002: 18) add that '[...] the need for headteachers in particular to become lead-learners of learning communities geared to providing a challenging education for pupils as well as co-ordinated CPD opportunities for teachers and other staff.' Similarly, Hopkins et al. (1997) school improvement project advocated a prominent role for instructional leaders in enhancing organisational capacity and having an impact on student achievement and learning. Hopkins (undated: 5)

argued for a style of leadership that is consistent with raising levels of student achievement. From this perspective, instructional leaders are able to create a synergy between a focus on teaching and learning on the one hand, and capacity building on the other.

A thorough review of the literature on educational leadership shows that instructional leadership remains under-researched in England. However, Dimmock's (2012) point may provide the reasons for the limited focus on principal's instructional model per se.

Talk of real [...] instructional leadership is futile under such circumstances [where government policy priorities are measured by league tables and inspection regimes that are nationally defined and unresponsive to local circumstances<sup>14</sup>], since the principalship is increasingly defined by the extent to which these outcome measures are achieved. There is little scope for much else. (ibid: 46)

Instructional leadership has been explored by Southworth (2002) in small primary schools in England, in what is regarded as a significant contribution to the literature. This research evidence provides one of the most comprehensive enquiries and sets the framework for instructional leadership practices. Although this study shows a high level of clarity about instructional leadership, it does not answer all the research questions (for example, whether it can be differentiated by context, gender or school size).

Southworth's (2002) project traces the practices adopted by heads to influence the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, and the strong connection between teaching, students' growth and teachers' professional learning is illuminated, as discussed earlier in this chapter (see page 32). The empirical data show principalship operating within a learning-centred framework in which the reciprocal effects of strengthening teaching could influence students' learning. Southworth (2002: 84) contends that '[the three leadership strategies] were major ingredients of the heads' instructional leadership because all of them understood

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<sup>14</sup> The quote in brackets is Dimmock's (2012: 46) but in the original text it is preceded by the rest of the quoted text here.

headship to be about developing the quality of the pupils' learning and enhancing pupils' progress.' They did this through a focus on teacher learning which signifies pedagogic development and professional dialogue as factors which directly and indirectly influence pupils' outcomes.

In the case of small schools it is reasonable to assume that heads will have stronger direct influence than those in much larger schools, where mediated effects are more likely to be at work. However, the ten heads [...] seem to have been very effective in how they indirectly influenced pupil outcomes. [...] these heads worked directly on the indirect pathways to effectiveness. [...] Because the heads *engaged* with the mediating factors, and often in a direct and personal way, they were particularly powerful in making a difference inside their schools. (Southworth, 2002: 85)

The outcomes from Southworth's study in the UK, which complement Blase and Blase (1998) findings in the USA, stress the importance of creating conditions facilitating instructional leadership, within a culture which enables schools to become learning organizations (e.g. Fullan, 1993; MacBeath and Myers, 1999; Southworth, 2000; Silins and Mulford, 2002).

The key themes emerging from research on large secondary schools (Earley et al. 2002) include underpinning professionals as learners, where the expectations for teaching and learning quality are high and shared among the stakeholders. Improving students' learning is at the heart of their activities, as they use data to track students' progress and set targets. Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations is an activity delegated to the SMT. Organizing residential training days for the school staff, setting an induction programme for teachers, and organizing professional development for all the staff, are practices experienced within and across the schools. Earley et al.'s (2002), and Muijs and Harris's (2007), empirical studies in secondary schools in England support the formal and informal nature of the professional development

of all the staff, facilitating good practices to maximize the support for teacher leadership.

Since Ofsted sets expectations about leadership enactment to improve teaching and learning, Ofsted recognizes aspects of learning-centred leadership, such as monitoring, evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and taking steps to improve the quality of teaching, for successful leadership in schools, as Ofsted's (2009) study reveals, as we shall see later in the chapter.

What emerges from the NCSL report (2004a) is that learning centred leaders influence school outcomes directly, indirectly or reciprocally, as was suggested by Hallinger and Heck (1999), and that effective leaders work directly on their indirect influence through the interrelated strategies of modelling, monitoring and dialogue (Southworth, 2004). Day et al.'s (2007b) and Sammons et al.'s (2011), empirical evidence show that the direct and indirect effects of school leadership practices in English primary and secondary schools, appear to influence academic results, while Day et al. (2007b: 111) stress that 'there are important *indirect effects of leadership* on pupil outcomes in addition to those direct influences which headteachers exercise.' The findings are in line with Leithwood et al.'s (2006a) widely cited study on the impact of leadership on student outcomes. The main strategies identified by secondary school heads as the most influential in improving students' outcomes are among those discussed in the next section of this chapter. In brief, these strategies comprise:

- Encouraging the use of data and research (34.0%),
- Teaching policies and programmes (27.7%),
- Improving school culture (21.1%),
- Providing and allocating resources (19.5%),



- Improved assessment procedures (18.6%),
  - Monitoring of departments and teachers (15.9%) and
  - Promoting leadership development and CPD (15.1%).
- (Sammons et al., 2011: 10)

Additional findings also show that the dimensions of ‘use of data’, ‘developing people’ and ‘use of observation’, together with ‘setting directions’ and ‘redesigning the organisation’, form a five factor structural model of change in leadership practice (Sammons et al., 2011: 13). Similarly, the OECD Report for England on improving school leadership (2007) highlights practices of instructional leadership in an attempt to:

- ensuring consistently good teaching and learning;
  - building the school as a professional learning community; and
  - developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities.
- (Higham et al., 2007: 24)

The insights drawn from Macfarlane and Woods’ (2011) study of outstanding schools in London support the researcher’s assumption that instructional leadership is likely to be applied in high-performing schools. For instance, a case study of one school showed that leadership for learning has a prominent role in the school as teachers and students co-construct learning through leadership opportunities developed for students to collaborate in their own learning. As we shall see in the next section, managing the curriculum through enhancing creativity in the curriculum and personalized learning, as well as monitoring students’ progress, is the catalyst for change. In two case study schools, developing a framework of cascading leadership to middle leaders ensured support to the teaching staff in order to achieve high standards, as also discussed later in the section. Efficiently distributed leadership, and developing staff leadership potential, are features of greatness which lead to improvement, as

noted in most of Macfarlane and Woods' case study schools. The above examples evidence the significance of instructional leadership as a positive element in developing and sustaining outstanding schools.

The outcomes of the leadership development programme Good To Great (G2G), set up by the London Leadership Strategy in 2008 to support schools to become great, and the Going For Great (G4G, 2010), focusing on London's outstanding schools to support them to maintain this designation and become great schools, added significantly to the empirical literature. Among the 'Eight Pillars of Greatness' (Macfarlane and Woods, 2010: 17), the following characteristics - directly and indirectly related to instructional leadership- support the building of a great school:

- Shared vision, values, culture and ethos
- World-class teaching, learning and assessment to support high levels of attainment and exceptional achievement
- Exceptional continuing professional development within a professional learning community
- A stimulating and inclusive environment most suitable for learning.
- A broad and balanced curriculum, promoting rich opportunities for high quality learning, fully meeting the needs of individuals and groups of pupils.
- Robust and rigorous self-evaluation and collective review.

(Macfarlane and Woods, 2010: 17)

The findings from 12 outstanding schools in England (Ofsted, 2009) have certain similarities with Macfarlane and Woods's (2011) results. Ofsted's (2009) report on secondary schools in challenging circumstances contributes to the literature on effective schools, in terms of identifying how these schools have succeeded and sustained success, through published examples of outstanding practice in schools. The prime contribution of outstanding and well-distributed leadership is

highlighted through the emergence of IL practices, while the high expectations for students, rich opportunities for learning, students' support to follow the path to success, and developing leaders, are among the features identified to make the schools outstanding 'against the odds'. Sustaining excellence requires the development of ways to develop teaching through helping teachers reflect on their practices, and sharing ideas among the staff, as findings highlighted under the components of instructional leadership.

Evidence from outstanding schools illustrates the significance of distributed leadership. However, the identification of learning-centred leadership practices, with a sense of shared ownership for the improvement and growth of the schools, also emerged in Southworth's (2004b) study of leadership in medium-sized primary schools facing challenging circumstances which showed a sustained improvement in pupils' outcomes.

Another significant project is the Carpe Vitam Leadership for Learning Project, focusing on the role of school leadership in creating a stimulating learning environment. It confirms that leadership for learning practice requires leadership that is shared and accountable, where teachers' role is crucial in creating environments which are supportive of learning. Within the fourth LfL principle - shared leadership- the emergence of dispersed forms of leadership is evident in the English LfL case studies. Leadership is not characterised by the actions of people who have a position of authority but by the actions taken by the teachers and other members of the school community, sharing leadership in the day-to-day flow of school activities (MacBeath and Swaffield, 2008). Enhancing conditions for learning, through providing more time and space for teachers to

discuss pedagogical issues with colleagues, was described by senior leaders in a London school as an attempt to ‘lift up learning’ and make it visible in the day-to-day life of the school, by giving them tangible shapes in formal and informal situations. (MacBeath, 2006: 41) Creating the space for tasks to be distributed is a tool for creating an effective learning environment. A navigation towards works related to issues in leadership for learning (MacBeath and Townsend, 2011a), shows how the nexus between leadership and learning is perceived from an international lens.

Higham and Hopkins (2010: 145) add to the literature concerning leadership to sustain improvement in challenging circumstances through highlighting the wider system roles that schools have to ‘share their knowledge and practice with other schools’, as further discussed in chapter eight. Similarly, Huber et al.’s (2007) study of two federated comprehensive secondary schools in England show how system leadership is used to boost school performance, linked to a distributed form of leadership, as well as operating with the adoption of instructional leadership characteristics such as teaching and learning focus, individualized students’ performance orientation and intervention, monitoring, and enlarging the school’s leadership capacity. (Huber et al., 2007: 21-33)

### **Instructional Leadership in Greece**

Much of the Greek literature is what Muijs (2011) has ‘called “position papers”’. ‘These are articles that are neither based on empirical research nor systematic literature reviews, but contain position statements on factors such as ethical

leadership or introduce new leadership concepts.’ (ibid: 116) The weaknesses of educational leadership research in Greece have led to a need for researchers to be more explicit about the underlying theories and practices of leadership.

There has been little discussion, based on evidence in Greek schools, on how student outcomes are improved, how leadership is conceptualized by school practitioners (teachers and headteachers) and whether and how leadership impacts on students’ learning. The articles scrutinized by the researcher suggests that Greece looks overseas on the best way to manage a school, mainly from USA and UK studies.

These considerations allow the researcher to construct a picture of a dual approach. First, there are quite a few theoretical articles in Greek journals written by educators, headteachers, school advisers, and Greek scholars (e.g. Brinia, 2008; Lainas, 2004; Papageorgopoulos, 2003; Saitis, 2008), who highlight important aspects within educational leadership and management. These articles present a theoretical knowledge base, or the findings of empirical research from other countries, suggesting a trend of ‘borrowing practices’ where possible. The authors- ‘educational actors’- feel the need to change some aspects of the Greek school context by disseminating external research data. Second, and more controversial, is the question of whether Greek scholars conceive school administration as a *status quo* that cannot be exercised differently within Greece. Adopting Muijs’s (2011: 115) argument about the weaknesses of the educational leadership research development, the limited presence of educational leadership practices embedded in the different school types in Greece may imply that ‘the

field [will] not continue to grow in importance as well as in quantity of outputs', if there is no research-based tank of effective leadership enactment.

### *Empirical research on instructional leadership in Greece*

Both the Greek and English language empirical literature implies that educational leadership models have been barely examined in the Greek context. Demertzi and Bagakis (2006: 144-145) state that 'there is an absence of empirical research studies on the concepts of leadership and learning, although there is a concern about the crucial issues of selecting leaders and for the significance of learning which goes beyond the school walls [...].' The essential point that makes the author's research distinctive is that there are no published studies of instructional leadership, in Greek or English, although there are quite a few papers viewing school management from principals' perspectives (e.g. Athanasoula- Reppa and Lazaridou, 2008; Christodoulou, 2007; Saitis, 1997a,b, 2002; Papanoum, 1995) the principal's role and its contribution to the school's effectiveness (e.g. Lainas, 2004; Stravakou, 2003), and effective schools (e.g. Pashiardis and Pashiardi, 2000). All these sources highlight the principal's managerial role and address the need for more autonomy in school management.

Saitis et al.'s (1997) main conclusion of a study exploring the extent of the managerial role of Greek primary school headteachers is that:

Due to the nature of the education system and what the educational law implies, the role of the teacher-headteacher is limited to managing bureaucratic processes rather than leading the school.

Results from Saitis et al. (1997) quantitative research study showed that Greek headteachers have executive powers in dealing with daily routine issues and not as leaders with characteristics of guiding, encouraging, collaborating, and creating the conditions for teachers' professional development. More specifically, the headteacher's managerial role is mainly limited to solving bureaucratic issues (43,3%) within the school. While most (53,3%) responded that, for the majority of their time, they are dealing with teaching, there is no evidence of school collaboration and networking within its social context. These authors highlight the need for training courses on school management, so that principals can respond to educational reform.

A decade later, Christodoulou's (2007) MA study of 20 headteachers' perceptions of school leadership and management in Greek schools (in the municipality of Serres) is in the same vein as Saitis et al. (1997). The former study also confirms the findings of Saitis and Eliophotou-Menon (2004) research which showed future teachers' lack of expectation with respect to their future principals' exercise of an effective school leadership role, while stressing an authoritative and managerial style of leadership which emanates from the Greek bureaucratic educational system. Bagakis (2007a: 162) states that:

in schools there are some routines that are difficult to change. In schools, discussions about classroom practices are not taking place at all, or there are a few. [...] the beggarly salaries, the bad law in education, the bad curriculum, the bad textbooks, [...] the bad training, the bad educational reforms are usually discussed.

There is no empirical evidence for measuring principals' impact on students' outcomes within secondary schools. Gkolia and Brundrett (2008: 48) state that 'this may be associated with the comparative absence of studies on the

effectiveness of Greek schools which may, in turn, be associated with the fact that the Greek government has been committed to the delivery of an equality agenda for the education of all pupils.’ However, as Antoniou (2012) mentions in his study within Cypriot secondary schools -notably Cyprus has a similar culture to Greece- private tuition and the socio-economic status of the students can be a factor affecting students’ academic outcomes. This is in vein with Verdis et al.’s (2003) study in Greek secondary schools.

Lainas (2004: 175) argues that the dimensions of the principal’s role that have been suggested by the literature to contribute to school effectiveness, are not among the characteristics of a ‘headteacher- administration processor’ that is mainly highlighted in the Greek context. Most of these practices are not in line with the policy context that set the expectations for a principal in Greek schools, although there has been an attempt in a recent Presidential Decree (FEK 1340B/16-10-2002):

- to include the practices of guiding the school community to set high goals;
- to ensure the context of creating a school open to society;
- to guide and support the teaching staff and take educational and pedagogical initiatives;
- to make sure the school can be a training unit for teachers; collaborate with teachers and motivate them;
- to evaluate teachers’ performance.



Based on a review of international studies on the headteachers' role and contribution to school effectiveness, Lainas (2004) addresses the need for creating pedagogic leaders in Greece. Saliaris (2009) addressed the role of the secondary school headteacher as a curriculum leader, through a quantitative study in two Greek islands. Headteachers responded positively to the proposed statements concerning the role of the headteacher as a curriculum leader and showed their willingness to 'make some steps' to move towards a more pedagogical role, but, due to the constraints of the centralized educational system, which promotes a bureaucratic role for heads, such an initiative cannot be enacted. (Saliaris, 2009: 91-92) The findings show headteachers' perceptions for a curriculum change in order to be more effective, such as improving and updating curriculum design, reducing the teaching material teachers are expected to teach, and adapting the curriculum based on the type of school.

However, Saliaris's (2009) findings that his headteacher-sample focused on procedural issues (e.g. observance of the school timetable rather than monitoring curriculum effectiveness) seems to confirm the literature (e.g. Saitis and Menon-Eliophotou, 2004; Christodoulou, 2007) which shows that a typical characteristic among Greek headteachers is their managerial-processing role. As Saiti (2009: 383) points out, 'a strongly centralized administrative system can be a significant obstacle to the efficiency of a schooling system.' This may lead to the argument that centralization, bureaucratic complexity and traditional methods of work, do not allow enough space for much organisational change within a Greek school.

As noted earlier, Greece participated in the research project entitled 'The Carpe Vitam Leadership for Learning Project'. The focus for development in the three

Greek schools involved in the study, has been on peer-observations among teachers, dealing with very difficult behaviours of students, students' leadership, the difficulties of expression of the adult learners in the second chance school, and systematic feedback to students (Bagakis et al., 2007c). Based on the key principles of learning and leadership developed by the project, Demertzi et al. (2009: 303) state that 'given the structure of the Greek education system, we found no evidence of the distribution of leadership through an established system or the attribution of shared roles.' MacBeath (2006: 43) perceptively states that:

in regimes with a deeply entrenched addiction to hierarchy, this presented a leadership dilemma. In Greek schools, principals spoke of constantly bumping up against a tradition that attached specific and inflexible roles to the head teacher, teachers, parents, and the school custodian. The 'responsibility virus', as Martin (2002)<sup>15</sup> describes it, can act as a glue which holds people to positional roles and allows senior leaders to carry the burden of management.

The main lesson from the three Greek schools' involvement in the LfL programme, which explores conditions facilitating learning, is that 'educational leadership is in its infancy' (Bagakis, 2007b: 270). One of the three participating schools illustrates the complexities of school change and improvement within a heavily centralized system. Teachers involved in the 'Leadership for learning' project perceived their involvement in the school development process as:

an attitude that demands decentralization of leadership and the assumption of responsible roles by all members of the school community. Consequently, they evaluated the way leadership was exercised in their school in the light of this attitude.' (Demertzi et al., 2009: 305)

Evidence from one secondary school shows that '[t]he optional and voluntary educational programmes provide leadership opportunities – mainly shared leadership- among the teachers, parents and students, and this new knowledge

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<sup>15</sup> Martin, R. L. (2003) *The Responsibility Virus*, London: Prentice- Hall.

can affect curriculum practice (Bagakis 2007b: 270). Biniari's (2012) doctoral research study in one low-secondary school in Athens, under the LfL programme, confirms that norms of professional collaborations have not been formalised in the Greek states schools, 'possibly due to the lack of the appropriate organisational climate.' (ibid: 214) However, in another school within this study, the headteacher agreed that initiatives by a group of teachers had established a new culture in the school, a culture that 'challenges traditional standards', experimenting with 'cooperative models of learning and leadership', (Demertzi et al., 2009: 305), providing evidence that teachers can initiate change.

MacBeath and Swaffield (2008: 8) argue that the strategy for creating conditions favourable to learning in Athens, was

to use the nucleus of teachers involved in the project as champions of change, through their focus on their own learning and that of their students, through the formal structures of weekly meetings, in the process promoting a cultural shift, a new discourse about learning and teaching and broader distribution of leadership.

This finding may reveal that a leadership attitude towards learning in Greek schools may be activated or constrained by the context and individual initiatives.

## **Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives on Components of Instructional Leadership**

In this part, key components of instructional leadership are discussed from a theoretical and empirical viewpoint, mainly through synthesizing research findings from the European empirical literature about leaders' instructional behaviours and strategies that enhance students' performance:

### *Vision for Learning*

Vision is among the most important leadership practices that successful leaders include in their repertoire. Earley et al. (2002) and Bush (2008a) agreed with Leithwood et al.'s (2006a: 34) finding that successful school leadership includes the notion of vision as the practice of enhancing 'motivation and inspiration for the work of staff' as an important dimension for the organisations' future.

Southworth's (2004b: 81) research in large primary schools in England showed that '[w]hat is interesting about the notion of vision is that it involved being able to assemble a big picture from many pieces: how the school was performing, where it was going. Fitting together these pieces was part and parcel of vision.' The results from a secondary analysis of an empirical comparative study of secondary schools principals in the Netherlands gave more details about the nature of vision:

'the variable vision relates to the task orientation of school principals, more specifically to the importance they attach to the performance of instructional [e.g. introducing new teaching ideas, evaluating the performance of students, supervising individual teachers] versus administrative tasks [e.g. planning class plans, managing the school budget]. (Kruger et al., 2007: 8)

Earley et al. (2002) claim that the consensus is that the best school leaders set high expectations in terms of teaching and learning, and monitor performance, to ensure that the institution has a clear sense of direction.

Penlington et al. (2008: 67), reporting on research in two schools, refer to a clear vision which helped in 'fostering a culture wherein staff felt empowered as change agents'. The example of Macfarlane and Woods' (2011) case study

school 19 reinforces their argument about vision establishing an influential mechanism for change and for sustaining or improving learning. In addition, Muijs and Harris's (2007) case studies in three UK secondary schools provide ample support for the argument that a shared vision among senior and middle level leadership is paramount. The role of the headteacher was significant in developing a 'shared [vision] and culture that positively encouraged teachers to innovate and lead [and have a collective commitment to school developments].' (ibid: 118).

Møller (2009: 253) widens the notion of vision by claiming that 'the sharing of leadership is considered successful because those wishing to share in the leadership of the school have learned first to share in the leader's vision of leading.' Constructing leadership for learning within a Norwegian context confirms previously cited research studies, that of LfL being the result of 'a clear vision for the school development and [the principal's constant] working at building consensus among the staff about long-term as well as short-term goals.' (ibid: 258) However, the notion of a common vision with shared ownership is not consistent across the literature. In England, Southworth (2004b), Day et al. (2007b), and Ofsted (2009) all stress the principal's sole accountability for setting the vision, which is then cascaded to the school staff. This was reiterated in Pashiardis and Savvides's (2011) research in rural primary schools in Cyprus, where school B principal's learning-centred approach to leadership led to developing a clear vision for improving achievement and setting high expectations for the teachers. This approach also underlies Kruger et al.'s (2007)

study in Netherlands, and Day et al.'s (2007b) analysis of data within their three year study of headteacher leadership and pupils' outcomes in England.

The pivotal role of the headteacher in setting and communicating a strategic school vision, and building collective leadership capacity framework for the improvement of pupil outcomes, were two of the main leadership features within 20 case studies (10 secondary) of schools involved in the 'Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes' project (2006-2009).

In outlining reasons for the schools' success in raising student outcomes, 78% of the participants across all 20 of the case-study schools [10 secondary schools] commented on the importance of the headteacher's strategic vision for the school. The success of the headteacher's vision, in terms of how it acted as a positive catalyst for change, seemed to be related to two dimensions. The first of these was the clarity of communication of the vision to staff, students and parents and second was the relevance of the vision to the school context. (Penlington et al., 2008: 66)

Similarly, the twelve outstanding English secondary schools in Ofsted's Report (2009: 12) 'had to achieve greatness' through headteachers' determination to transform the schools they took on and set the highest expectations for all. The superintendents' (school directors outside school) leading instructional visionary role, concerning a high focus on their work and the work of others for increasing student learning and outcomes, has been highlighted in Bredeson and Johansson's (1997: 15) study of leadership for learning in Sweden and the United States.

The nature of school leaders' engagement with the vision-setting process lies in the headteachers' approach to the extent of vision ownership. However, this evidence reinforces Bagakis' (2007a: 164) statement that the culture of 'cool

management’ without significant discussions on schools’ progress and practices has created the culture of the ‘automatic pilot’ and the lack of vision and orientation of each school [in the Greek context].’

### *Curriculum Management*

The research evidence shows that managing and coordinating the curriculum is a set of practices providing instructional support for teachers. Robinson et al.’s (2008: 662) prominent study showed that ‘teachers in higher performing schools report that their leaders are actively involved in collegial discussion of instructional matters’. This finding is reiterated in Day et al.’s (2007b: p.ix) research where most staff agreed that ‘headteachers are involved in the detail of curriculum development and the pedagogy of improvement.’ Earley et al.’s (2002: 84) study suggest a somewhat different picture as ‘[m]iddle managers and subject leaders were seen as experts by headteachers as well as by the rest of the school staff [...] to manage their curriculum area, [and this] shaped the rest of the staff’s perception of them as experts in their area.’

The curriculum management structures have been highlighted in Southworth’s (2004) study within very large primary schools.

In addition to [the] ‘horizontal strand’ [-team of teachers plus classroom assistants], the school also had the ‘vertical’ structure of the curriculum, where curriculum managers or subject leaders [...] had whole-school responsibility for their subject area. These horizontal and vertical strands create a matrix model of responsibilities. In some ways this matrix model of management mirrored that commonly found in secondary schools where subject departments and heads of year form a well-established pattern. (Southworth, 2004: 81)

Brown et al.'s (2000) research on the UK secondary school heads of departments' leadership role in school improvement, reveals that, since the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework and Ofsted inspection, autonomy and ownership of curriculum construction has been reduced.

The heads of department reported a great reduction in their autonomy and some now regard themselves as the 'buffer' between the aspirations of their colleagues and the demands of the National Curriculum. Policy decisions, it was claimed, are increasingly being made with the inspection agenda and the senior management team in mind and do not necessarily correlate with the priorities the head of department considers appropriate. (Brown et al., 2000: 249-250)

However, the position is different in Finland, with a greater emphasis on the pivotal role of teachers and principals in curriculum development. Sahlberg's (2007) study sheds light on stakeholders' active involvement, where in many cases teachers as curriculum advisors collaborate with teachers and school leaders:

Because the focus of teaching in Finland is typically on learning, rather than on preparing students for tests [...], different teaching methods are employed without fear of failure throughout the school system. Innovations are fairly readily accepted by teachers if they are regarded as appropriate for promoting student learning. (Sahlberg, 2007: 156)

In contrast, the evidence from policy documents and empirical data suggests that curriculum management is a top down activity within the Greek high school context. A striking example is Saliaris' (2009) study revealing that only 26.9% of teacher participants strongly agree that a headteacher as a curriculum leader should advise on teaching design issues. This low percentage may be in line with the headteachers' (71.1%) acknowledgement that 'the training they had received for this role is either little or none, whereas only 3.8% feel competent enough to take up this role.' (ibid: 77)



A sub-theme within this section is curriculum intervention. Pont et al. (2008: 130) refer to developing a curriculum road map which assists curriculum intervention:

[w]ith the national standards in view, [...] schools set realistic but challenging performance targets for each student, at each level, in each subject. To do this, schools have considered flexibility in adapting curriculum to align it with standards in ways most suitable for their students.

The importance of offering curriculum subject choices that meet individual student needs, and the significance of adapting instruction to create a learning environment for students, appears to be a high priority within some English research studies, for example:

[Staff in an outstanding school in London] have stressed how much they have enjoyed and valued the challenge of designing and teaching a curriculum programme which they felt they had ownership of. They claim that there has been a significant impact on their individual teaching styles which has spilled over into their teaching of GCSE and A level classes, effecting improvements for everyone. (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011: 84)

Reviewing Key Stage 4 curriculum pathways to meet the individual needs of particular cohorts, as evidence of personalizing curriculum, is the main issue addressed in Macfarlane and Woods' (2011) case study schools 14 and 15. Similarly, one of Ofsted's (2009) outstanding secondary schools set up a separate department of literacy, teaching it as 'a discrete timetable subject', a striking example of the focus of an outstanding school to enhance students' own learning through '[helping] students to become better readers and to develop the necessary interpretation skills to access the curriculum fully.' (ibid: 42) The theme of personalized learning is discussed by West-Burnham in an NCSL overview (undated: 15), which shows that curriculum 'choice [...] is fundamental

to any model of personalising learning [...].’ Personalisation is empirically explored in Pont et al.’s (2008) study in English secondary schools within a targeted curriculum and instruction as a strategy to enhance students learning opportunities. ‘School staff [stated] that they are “creating the maximum amount of flexibility for the child who could not cope with the standard or regular classroom or programme”.’ (Pont et al., 2008: 133)

A Spanish case, reported by Murillo (2002), contrasts with the English schools’ findings in stressing the importance of a highly structured curriculum design with the potential to impact on pupils’ achievement. In Greek low secondary schools (Saliaris, 2009: 85), there is the flexibility to implement more educational programmes, which will give students opportunities to be creative, collaborate, and think beyond curriculum and exams. This may contrast with high secondary schools, with their oppressive devotion to the national examination procedure. This argument may be related to a generic limited literature in secondary education in Greece, as shown throughout the thesis. However, Biniari’s (2012) results showed that, even in a Greek low secondary school, constrained opportunities for activating strategies for student learning (e.g. through dialogue) are the result of ‘teachers’ focus on delivering the session only, and not in showing students how to learn.’ (ibid: 232)

### *Evaluation of students results*

Evidence from Ofsted’s (2009) study of successful schools suggests that the senior leadership team (SLT) constantly analyses and evaluates students’ results with the purpose of monitoring their progress and developing intervention

strategies for underachieving students. Day et al. (2007b) show a similar picture, where staff are encouraged to use data in order to identify pupils' needs: '[c]lose to 90% of key staff agreed that the head encouraged them to use data in their work to plan for individual pupil needs and to make most decisions about school improvement.' (ibid: 63)

This stance is supported by other studies of outstanding schools in England. For example, Macfarlane and Woods' (2011) outstanding case study school 20 shows the leadership team's ongoing monitoring of students' data which enabled them to provide effective support for maximising student achievement. Earley et al.'s (2002) large secondary school (case study A) provides help to students, through tracking their progress and then setting targets for students and the school. The use of data informs teachers dialogue about student progress and the introduction of personal tutoring has been the drive for dialogue about students' learning. 'An Achievement Day [has been introduced] to provide in-depth, quality learning conversations between the parent, student and tutor about targets, progress, behaviour and attendance' in a London school (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011: 137)

#### Post-evaluation intervention

Followed the outcomes of the diagnostic process, data from outstanding schools in England confirms that they have activated post evaluation processes for a more inclusive school. In particular, Ofsted (2009) and Macfarlane and Woods (2011) studies suggest that removing barriers to learning for under-achieving students needs a learning support unit and a tracking system which helps refining

approaches to progress-tracking and goals setting. Providing additional personalised support strategies for those students who are underperforming is a common thread in such research (Pont et al., 2008; Ofsted 2009; Macfarlane and Woods, 2011). The example of providing additional ‘timetabled lessons after school every day of the week [...] and half-term and Easter revision days were completed by a deputy headteacher in order to avoid clashes between subjects and maximise student attendance’ (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011: 132-133) are features of intervention for borderline students which support the previous argument.

Pont et al.’s (2008) secondary school B case is similar to Macfarlane and Woods (2011) case study school 23 which enhanced the opportunities for challenging student learning, in terms of academic and behavioural support, through ‘[...] setting up of an in-school sanctuary for vulnerable students [which is a learning space with different zones of support to reduce exclusion.]’ (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011: 151) Another striking example is that of one of Ofsted’s outstanding schools’ (2009) which, once underachievement has been recognized in one ethnic minority group, the school set up a parental involvement group as a strategy of overcoming barriers to learning.

Monitoring students’ progress, and providing in-depth intervention to fit students’ needs and the specific school context, are the core tasks of the leadership team in the English case study schools cited in this part of the literature review. However, the extent to which personalized intervention strategies are implemented within the English context should not be exaggerated, as this is primarily evident in outstanding schools, as the above data reveal.

### *Monitoring teachers' performance*

NCSL leadership development programmes stress the need for a clear focus on learning through effective teaching. Bush and Glover (2003b: 33), in their NCSL report, have stated that '[t]his inevitably means helping leaders at all levels to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and to implement strategies such as classroom observation as part of the evaluation process.' Southworth (2003) and the NCSL (2007) learning-centred leadership report indicate that one of the strategies that influence the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms is monitoring:

[which] includes analyzing and acting on pupil progress and outcome data [...]. Leaders also need to visit classrooms, observing teachers at work and providing them with constructive feedback. [...] Monitoring also enables leaders not only to keep in touch with colleagues' classrooms, but also to develop, over time, knowledge of teachers' strengths and development needs. (NCSL, 2007: 9)

International literature, such as Leithwood et al.'s (2008: 32) overview of the literature on successful school leadership, also showed that 'a key task for leadership, if it is to influence pupil learning and achievement, is to improve staff performance.' In addition, Robinson et al. (2008: 662) pinpointed that 'the degree of leader involvement in classroom observation and subsequent feedback was also associated with higher performing schools' and these observations helped teachers to improve their teaching.

As Southworth (2004b: 104) points out '[i]n England, the work of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has played a central role in promoting the value and importance of knowing what is happening in all classrooms across a school.' Day et al.'s (2007b) research sheds light on the headteacher's instructional

leadership role under this theme, as one of the key strategies which work as an influence upon pupils' learning.

To manage successfully the teaching and learning programme, considerable effort is required of leaders to keep attention in their schools focused on the core work of teaching. The majority of heads in [Day et al.'s (2007)] study reported regularly observing classroom activities, working with teachers directly to improve their teaching after observations, sometimes through coaching and mentoring; most key staff agreed that their heads did these things. (ibid: xiii)

Another sub-theme is middle leadership's role in monitoring teaching and learning. This is the case in a large secondary school in England (case study D) which reveals that, 'although 'securing and sustaining effective teaching and learning throughout the school' is listed as one of the headteacher's key tasks, in general, this is seen as the key role of the heads of departments.' (Earley et al., 2002: 107). Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing practice at all levels through departmental reviews were common practices, while an emphasis on leadership from the middle emerged through the impact of data and assessment systems. Joint observations of teachers' lessons by middle leaders and the SLT twice a year have been introduced in two outstanding secondary schools in London (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011). In a similar vein, Ofsted's (2009) study of outstanding schools in England shows that the quality of teaching and learning is enhanced through monitoring, evaluating and reflecting on pedagogy and learning from both the senior leadership team and subject teachers.

[...] members of the senior leadership team do 'drop in' classroom visits every day, [for example in Bartley Green School] who support staff and ensure that teaching and learning are of the expected standard. [...] Teachers [also] undertake peer observations across departments so that good practice is widely shared and inter-disciplinary collaboration fostered. (Ofsted, 2009: 19)

Monitoring of teaching and learning is an important process for peer-learning, where strengths and development needs are identified (Southworth 2004b; Pont et al. 2008). Sammons et al.'s (2011: 9) research highlights that there was considerable change after 'regularly observing classroom activities' and 'working with teachers to improve their teaching after observing classroom activities'.

In Greece, there has been great interest in teachers' performance evaluation, where advocates (e.g. Pamouktsoglou, 2003; Haniotakis and Kapsalis, 2002; Solomon, 1999) emphasise the social and pedagogical benefits of establishing this process, as it is a feedback tool helping teachers to improve their performance. Papakonstantinou (1993) makes the same point as Athanasoula-Reppa (2008: 44) that:

Teachers' trade unions denounce the introduction of teacher's evaluation as the come back of "inspectorship" and the tight ideological control and policing of the pedagogical practice. [...] As a result, the Presidential Decree 320/1993 was not enacted.

Pamouktsoglou's (2003: 110-111) research, based on primary schools advisers' evaluation reports from 1993-2000, showed that the majority of teachers are positive about evaluation for all those people involved in the education process and want to stop perceiving evaluation as a 'taboo' in the Greek education context. Korilaki (2006: 422) states that schools in the Greek context are unfamiliar with a system of educational monitoring, while adding that there is a perception that a 'monitoring system would influence school and classroom discrepancies [...]'. In Christodoulou's (2007) study, though, the majority of headteachers responded to their potential involvement in teachers' evaluation.

However, two participants commented that headteachers have insufficient knowledge of school management and teachers' evaluation.

### *Mentoring and Coaching*

Coaching and mentoring are widely regarded as suitable for leadership and professional development (e.g. Bush and Glover, 2005; Baranik et al., 2009; Blackman, 2010). While mentoring and coaching are often used interchangeably in the literature, and in official documents (e.g. Ofsted), the author will use these terms independently. Among the most effective pedagogical measures (Grassinger et al., 2010), mentoring is conceptualised in the form of a more experienced leader or teacher providing support to other teachers and influencing their teaching (Gilles and Wilson, 2004). However, apart from the one-on-one session, that usually has a hierarchical character, implying a relationship between a superior and subordinate, a move towards both formalised and less formalised collegial approaches to professional learning has emerged. Peer-mentoring which capitalises on the instructional expertise of teachers (Barak and Hasin, 2010) constitutes another form of interaction, while it also 'intend[s] to encourage formal and informal career development [and] reciprocal learning between mentors and mentees' (Barnett and O'Mahony, 2008: 238), possibly highlighting a 'power-free' relationship. Being regarded as a professional development tool, its limited existence could be conceived detrimental to teaching staff growth. However, Moorosi (2012: 497) argues that 'dyadic mentoring is arguably more likely to perpetuate unequal power relations and leave the *status quo* intact.'



Wise and Jacobo's (2010) framework for leadership coaching is in line with 'Vygotsky[']s] (1978b) [statement that] coaching can be used as a tool; a catalyst to bring about change' (Wise and Jacobo, 2010: 162), building upon methods of reflection for a change. Within educational contexts, developing a culture of coaching is seen to increase the instructional skills of teachers mainly through:

- reflective and developmental practice coaching (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990; Grant et al., 2010),
- instructional coaching which facilitates and guides content-focused teachers' professional learning (AISR, undated),
- coaching as a leadership development vehicle for teachers (Simkins et al., 2006; Blackman, 2010; Ely et al., 2010),
- collegial/peer coaching, predominantly promoting the spirit of cooperation and action planning with a professional learning culture orientation (e.g. Day, 1999; Rhodes et al, 2004; Grant et al., 2010).

NCSL's (undated) exploration of how leaders make a difference to support students' learning and teachers' development indicates that the learning-centred leadership practice of dialogue, focusing on teaching and learning, creates the development of professional learning opportunities. Also, Creasy and Patterson (2005) outlined professional learning dialogue as one type of coaching for leadership to support the development of thinking and practice between a school leader and a teacher, or with peers. In addition, Southworth's (2002: 84) research showed that professional dialogues develop a shared knowledge context among staff and headteachers' deeper understanding about 'what is happening in

classrooms with the purpose to secure teaching practices improvement to raise student outcomes.’ Similarly, in Earley et al.’s (2002: 92) large English secondary school (case study A), professional dialogue to improve teaching and children’s learning was at the heart of leadership in action.

Another theme related to mentoring and coaching is the notion of critical friendship, as highlighted in the LfL project, targeted to knowledge building through teachers’ professional dialogue:

[...] in one of the London schools the creation of a working space for use by teachers from a number of subject departments prompted informal conversations as teachers planned and reviewed student work. Teachers were able to draw on each other’s expertise and insights, ask for feedback, and make links for their students with other subjects. (Swaffield, 2008a: 327)

A striking example of distributing mentoring responsibilities among middle leaders is evident in Muijs and Harris’s (2007: 118) case studies in UK primary and secondary schools where ‘[...] a new coaching and mentoring programme was introduced to develop the leadership skills of the members of the newly constituted senior management team.’ In recent years, there has been greater emphasis on peer-level mentoring and coaching, instead of a top down practice, supported by examples from English schools. Creating the conditions for effective knowledge management among staff was the focus in a London outstanding secondary school, through an approach that required learning partnerships via coaching and mentoring (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011). In the same vein, Ofsted’s (2009) outstanding schools focus on teachers working together to improve teaching, by reflecting on pedagogy rather than content.

Similarly, Ngaajieh Nnane (2009: 78) emphasises peer coaching in four Finnish secondary schools as '[teachers as] mentors and experts in their fields [cannot be] actually [mentored] directly and it is never done formally'. This suggests that teachers' advanced academic subject knowledge does not leave space for the headteacher to intervene in their pedagogical role. As a consequence, a collaborative model (peer coaching) prevails as a practice of peer-learning through staff sharing ideas and peer support with the purpose to improve the quality of teaching, as highlighted in Sammons et al's. (2011) and Ngaajieh Nnane's (2009) research studies. In contrast, Demertzi and Bagakis's (2006) findings from one low secondary school in Athens suggest that Greek teachers do not adopt collaborative practices to improve their teaching. The case shows the absence of peer learning through the help, advice and guidance of other Greek educators-colleagues. '[Greek participants] do not perceive learning as a collective and social procedure that is developing within the school environment.' (Demertzi and Bagakis, 2006: 143) Similarly, Biniari's (2012) study school, included in the same LfL project in Greece, showed that teachers do not perceive themselves as learners within their own school and are not advocates of practices which enhance interactive professional learning. The notion of 'learning organisation' (Senge, 1990) does not seem to be well perceived in the Greek context, while Biniari's (2012: 234) research participants 'perceive school only as a place of work rather than a centre for professional development.'

In England, peer support and partnership are valued highly by secondary headteachers, as Earley et al. (2002), Schmitz and Brown (2006) and Swaffield (2008) all suggest. It is striking that, in Earley et al.'s (2002: 9) research, the

secondary school leaders ‘look chiefly to their peers, both within and outside school, for ideas and inspiration.’ Swaffield’s (2008b) small scale study confirms the significance of partnerships among headteachers and states that ‘they needed people who understood them and their context, who could provide practical advice, and with whom you could “let off steam” with no repercussions.’ (ibid: 18). A finding from another prominent project, the ISSPP, highlights the significance of making ‘a tangible move towards greater peer support, with more coaching and structured professional dialogue.’ (NCSL, 2010: 11)

### *Modelling*

Modelling is one of the strategies used by effective school leaders to influence what is happening within classrooms, as stated in NCSL’s (2004a) overview of learning-centred leadership.

Modelling is all about the power of example. [...] Teachers watch what leaders do in order to check whether their actions are consistent over time and to test whether they do as they say, because teachers do not follow leaders who cannot walk the talk. Successful leaders are aware that they must set an example and use their actions to show how colleagues should behave. (ibid: 8)

Modelling is one of the main ways through which school leaders can exercise influence towards their colleagues. Southworth (2003: 10) argues that

[t]he power of example is exceptionally strong in schools. Being able to show others that you can “walk the talk” is of inestimable value. [I]ndeed, for Heads or Principals, and for teachers, it is the very foundation of their credibility.

Leading by example encompasses dimensions where leaders serve as role models for their followers, as shown in Earley et al.’s (2002) secondary school D:

[the headteacher] tries to model effective leadership for his heads of department so that they, in their turn, will become enabling leaders for the subject staff whom they manage. There was a recognition that, as far as the school's leadership was concerned, 'teaching and learning comes first'. (ibid: 107)

One of the case study schools in Pashiardis and Savvides's (2011) study of successful school principals in rural primary schools in Cyprus showed that instructional leadership was strengthened through the principal's strategy to assist weaker teachers to improve by designing 'model lessons [together] and for whom he actively demonstrated teaching methods.' (ibid: 421)

A sub-theme within modelling was a feature of Muijs and Harris's (2007) study. Sharing good practice is a common strategy across one researched large secondary school, instead of leaders' demonstrating good teaching. Similarly, collaborative learning within groups of teachers was a common feature in medium sized and large primary schools via 'structural units such as Key Stage teams, departments of teachers, or year groups [...]. In some schools teachers get together in alternative groupings and form their own learning teams or action learning sets.' (Southworth, 2004b: 147) The essence of this argument is the shift from a 'top-down' form of learning towards a more horizontal strand, where colleagues share practice among peers.

### *Continuing Professional Development*

Whilst '[d]eveloping people and nurturing talent is a key strategic leadership issue facing all types of organisations [...]' (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2007: 5), the need for a wide range of in-house opportunities and governmental

professional development imperatives emerged from the wider literature. The notion of CPD has been perceived by OECD (2001) as a vital notion in promoting teachers' growth within and beyond teaching, while Bell and Bolam (2010: 98) have considered it 'fundamental to the improvement of conceptualizing performance and, therefore, as a core task of management and leadership.' According to OECD (2001: 27), CPD is

central to the way principals manage schools, in at least two respects: first, as instructional leaders, principals may be expected to coordinate professional progression of their staff; second, they need to manage the learning community as a whole, using development as part of school change.

Leithwood et al.'s (2008) literature review revealed the emphasis on leaders' contribution to building staff capacity. Capacity building is key practice for leaders who have instructional improvement at the heart of their activities (e.g. Southworth, 2002; Frost and Durrant, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006b; Hallinger, 2011b; Heikka and Waniganayake, 2011). Bubb and Earley (2011) illustrate the significant role of distributing leadership for leading teaching and supporting staff development processes (developing skills and knowledge), with the goal of building capacity under the school improvement plans within a learning community.

Continuing professional development approaches vary across countries. In contrast to the variety of CPD opportunities for teachers in England and Wales, as described by Bell and Bolam (2010: 100-101), CPD for teachers in Greece appears to be concerned only with pedagogy but without creating the conditions for reflection and in-depth discussion. (e.g. Demertzi and Bagakis, 2006; Biniari, 2012)

Within the school context, a fundamental aspect for discussion has been the provision of staff development opportunities to address teachers' instructional needs. Several initiatives have emerged for professional development in both researched countries, not only through the provision of mentoring and coaching, predominantly in England (e.g. Rhodes and Beneicke, 2002), but also through more conventional pathways, in the Greek case, through conferences and seminars to update teachers' pedagogical knowledge (e.g. Kedraka, 2008). In the form of induction, training beginning teachers, such as NQTs (e.g. Bubb and Earley, 2011: 801), is part of staff development in the English context.

Introducing leadership development programmes for aspiring leaders, and for middle leadership, forms part of leadership pathways, by the National College in England while, in Greece, the notion of professional development for principals is debatable, as discussed later in this section. In contrast, Karstanje and Webber's (2008: 748) overview of school principal preparation trends in Bulgaria suggests that '[instructional leadership is used as the choice of a leadership concept, as it is] a useful model as the future school leaders have to focus on relations among the components, which makes it a strong anchoring point for improving school leadership competences.'

Adding to the repertoire of learning is the provision of leadership coaching for deputy headteachers. This emerged as a finding within the English context in the ISSPP research project (NCSL, 2010: 13), where the headteachers involvement in the deputy heads' headship pathway was important for their leadership development. Crawford and Earley's (2011:110) evaluation of the NPQH

programme (National Professional Qualification for Headship) in England showed that ‘the personalised [nature of leadership development]; school placements (or leadership development visits); coaching; and peer networks’ were the elements of the programme which had the most impact on participants’ leadership development. Southworth (2004a: 345), as the NCSL voice, acknowledges that ‘programmes have a part to play [...] but the school too must be seen as a learning environment for leadership development’ highlighting the need for more in-school development of leadership capacity.

The emergence of ‘mutual support for learning’ (Rhodes and Beneicke, 2002: 297), through collaborative peer interaction practices (e.g. coaching, mentoring, networking) established within the school community, constitutes another CPD mechanism for teachers’ growth, as noted earlier. The development of ‘teachers as learners’ is the outcome of a collaborative culture, and an environment for learning, with the purpose of becoming a professional learning community, while Bolam et al.’s (2005) report summarises effective professional learning community characteristics.

Earley et al.’s empirical work (2002) shows that:

[t]here was a noticeably strong emphasis on continuous professional development [in the ten outstandingly led English schools]. In many schools, the headteachers brought courses to the notice of their staff members, [they created CPD opportunities within the schools through reflective conversations, as] they were concerned to establish a ‘professional learning community’ (NCSL, 2001). (Earley et al., 2002: 84)

Similarly, Pashiardis and Savvides’ (2011) research in Cyprus highlights the principal’s instructional leadership role (primary school D) in organising seminars to share teaching practices for the school teaching staff, and through



encouraging ‘[...] the use of “open classrooms” [...] by which the teachers observed each other’s lessons and then brought the main issues observed to the weekly staff meetings for constructive critical dialogue.’ (ibid: 422 )

The evidence from recent studies in outstanding schools in England (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011; Ofsted, 2009) illustrates the senior leadership team’s role in developing staff potential, driven by the desire to create a strong learning culture. ‘The Senior Management Team are very effective at ‘spotting potential’ and then providing the support needed for colleagues to take up leadership roles within the school.’ (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011: 54). In one of the case studies schools in Macfarlane and Woods’s (2010: 52) Going for Great programme in outstanding schools in London, leaders were engaged in a professional learning community through the establishment of Action Learning Sets.

At the school many of the teachers had been or were already engaged in action research to some extent, some through existing CPD opportunities including an Early Professional Development programme and some through more formal courses such as the Masters programme. This has helped develop much good practice in departments but it was not yet disseminated effectively across the whole school. Such staff were positive about their research and felt it had a positive impact on their teaching and learning.

Another London outstanding school (Macfarlane and Woods, 2010: 75) shows an emphasis on the creation of a sustained improvement climate through providing professional learning support and CPD opportunities to staff and focusing on strategies to enable staff to deliver outstanding teaching and learning. The school created the GOSH (Good to Outstanding Suits Haydon) group to ensure best practice was shared; to ensure staff had a clear understanding of the constituents of an outstanding lesson; to support staff who wanted to improve teaching and

learning in their lessons; and to provide CPD opportunities for outstanding teachers (ibid: 76). Another key aspect for staff development is the creation of the space so that all staff are encouraged to have a facilitator role. Macfarlane and Woods (2011) also discuss advanced teachers' involvement in developing excellent teaching through sharing outstanding pedagogical practice.

To reduce the disparity between staff still further, programmes have been developed that capture the pedagogical excellence of outstanding teaching. Colleagues undertake such programmes so that they can better facilitate student learning [...] and reflect on their own practice. [...] The impact of this work has been considerable. GCSE results have continued to rise significantly above national figures [...] and nearly every subject in the school is performing in the top 25% nationally. (ibid: 74)

The evidence from Earley et al. (2002), and Macfarlane and Woods (2011), is in line with Ofsted's (2009) data from twelve outstanding English secondary schools, which stresses the strong in-house continuing professional development opportunities. Similarly, McMahon's (1999) research in 66 English secondary schools highlights the different nature of in-service training provision, based on the rural and urban schools context. In contrast, decentralised in-service training initiatives seem to underpin a successful system in Finland. Sahlberg (2007) reveals well trained teachers as a contributing factor and stresses the importance of professional development:

Most compulsory, traditional in-service training has disappeared. In its place are school- or municipality-based longer term programs and professional development opportunities. Continuous upgrading of teachers' pedagogical professionalism has become a right rather than an obligation. (ibid: 155)

Disparities between perceptions are apparent within the framework of CPD opportunities in the Finnish context. In Ngaajieh Nnane's (2009: 94) study:

[r]espondents constantly mentioned training as part of their professional development through the various seminars and conferences at regional and

national levels and attending courses at the university. Teachers go in for several training opportunities within the country and outside the country.

Although the conceptual literature (e.g. Kedraka, 2008) within the Greek context confirms CPD's significance as a tool for strengthening teachers' development and improvement, the limited empirical data does not support this argument. Vitsilaki-Soroniati's (2002) conclusions from an empirical study of Greek primary teachers' life long learning 'upgrading' programme draw attention to teachers' limited experience with continuing education and raises a debate about the aim of CPD programmes in Greece. Negative perceptions of a professional development programme are derived from the majority of research participants' view that:

they did not perceive this programme as an activity contributing to their teaching improvement [...]. (Vitsilaki-Soroniati, 2002: 42)

However, a later account establishes the acceptance of in-house collaborative learning initiatives, with an emphasis on the management team's (head, deputy head) support for collaborative teachers' initiatives. This is evidenced in one of the LfL schools which took part in the Carpe Vitam LfL change process programme (Demertzi, 2007).

Another theme from the English schools literature is the trend of framing a picture of outstanding-training schools to suit the needs of the partner schools in their local authority. 'These schools often use graduate or employment-based initial teacher training (EBITT) or school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) schemes to train people from the local area, ensuring that their staffing profile reflects that of the local community.' (Ofsted, 2009: 16) Earley et al.'s

(2002: 94) research highlights the existence of formal and informal opportunities to staff 'to lead on projects, to network and to work in other schools' for their professional development. Both English secondary schools in Pont et al.'s (2008) study share their expertise with other schools through partnership arrangements and school collaborations, helping other schools to improve and creating opportunities for other leaders to develop. 'Promising teachers and staff can be developed through the Developing Leaders Programme.' (Pont et al., 2008: 134)

The investigation of CPD opportunities within and across English schools revealed 'a recent trend [that highlights] the creation of opportunities for outstanding school leaders to play a role in developing other schools' (McKinsey & Company, undated: 20) through the provision of opportunities for leadership growth in schools which are struggling (e.g. the National Leaders of Education and National Support Schools). In this case, greater capacity is developed through more distributed leadership and effective heads (e.g. executive heads) have the potential to respond to new challenges and transform leadership in failing schools. (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2007) The report on the ISSPP (NCSL, 2010) showed that among the issues that school leaders are facing in England is the beneficial link between federations of schools under a single governing body and the continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers, while '[sharing] good practice, experience working in other settings and even permanently move roles across schools.' (ibid:11)

The federated and system leadership models in the English schools create a platform for fostering professional learning through collaboration between schools. Higham and Hopkins's (2010: 134) empirical work develops a link

between school leaders' system leadership and school improvement, across a wider system context in three English schools facing challenging circumstances. A striking example is 'the development of a set of professional learning practices within an improvement process. [...] This led into on-the-job learning.' (ibid:142)

Another theme is the emergence of Learning Schools in England which are characterized by collaborative professional learning among teachers, where teamwork and professional sharing of ideas on teaching and learning improves pedagogy.

The point of this work is to create a learning environment for all staff enabling them to continuously improve the quality of the children's learning and the teachers' pedagogy. Professional conversations and dialogues, informed by a knowledge of what is actually taking place stimulate on-the-job learning. Staffroom talk, the sharing of ideas and plans, opportunities for peer-observation and collegial feedback provide a variety of contexts for osmotic learning by individuals and groups of teachers. (Southworth, 2004b: 131)

This notion has much in common with the picture painted earlier in this section, concerning collaborative practices and ongoing peer learning through professional dialogues, mentoring, coaching.

## **Overview**

This section discussed the main issues emerging from the themes identified in the literature, while reviewing the concepts and models underpinning the research questions, which, in turn, strongly influence the structure of the analysis. Bringing together scholarly empirical contributions from around Europe, gave birth to empirical and theoretical comparisons between England and Greece. Despite some common understanding, variations in applications arise due to contextual factors.

The empirical evidence in England reinforces the presence of instructional leadership in primary (e.g Southworth, 2002, 2004) and outstanding secondary schools (Ofsted, 2009; Macfarlane and Woods, 2011). A thorough exploration of the literature suggests that monitoring teachers' performance, mentoring and coaching, and a range of CPD opportunities, are the most widely acknowledged features.

Within the Greek educational context, leadership is conceptualized as a hidden culture that is not visibly embedded in the schools' organizational context due to the bureaucratic nature and hierarchical structures of principalship. Related to this argument is the critique that the majority of the Greek papers on school leadership are either a review of good leadership practices from the international literature or they take the form of 'tips for leaders' through making assertions about effective aspects of school leadership. The existence of limited evidence on aspects of leadership (e.g the LfL Project) is not enough to reduce the distance between the dichotomy of management- learning- leadership, as Greek leadership seems to be interpreted as passive consent to top-down imperatives. However, the picture painted from the wider European context is slightly different. Practices of instructional leadership vary, due to contextual factors, leading to differentiated practices.

This theoretical and empirical literature provide the starting point for the author's four case studies within a cross-country context. The methodology for her study is discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explains the philosophy of the present study in terms of methodology and the factors that influenced the researcher's choice of methods. More specifically, the paradigms underlying this research design, the research approach chosen, the methods used and the procedures for sampling and data collection are described. Issues of reliability, validity and triangulation are addressed along with the data analysis procedure.

### **Research Paradigms**

The significance of epistemology and theoretical perspectives in research design influences the appropriate methodology for this research. The choice of research methodology is determined by a combination of factors such as the researcher's attitude towards discovering the 'truth', either by exploring people's perspectives or focusing on facts through testing of empirical experience. Hence, the current study's methodology is influenced by the researcher's epistemological stance of the different theoretical perspectives available, notably, positivism and various strands of interpretivism are the most influential. These paradigms – the 'basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 105) - also link to the decision as to whether research should follow a deductive or inductive approach.

Within a deductive approach, which is usually associated with quantitative research, a researcher, based on the theoretical framework in a particular research

context, deduces a hypothesis to drive the gathering data process that must then be subjected to empirical scrutiny. However, the exploratory position of the current research data, to portray the nature of instructional leadership in Greece and England, is not appropriate for a positivistic stance in which theories are tested through generating hypotheses (Bryman, 2008).

Given that this research emphasis is neither on ‘the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008: 14) nor the production of generalizable data, an inductive approach is adopted, which ‘is fundamentally interpretive’ (Creswell, 2003: 182), grounded in the meanings participants give within two dissimilar educational systems, in order to determine how instructional leadership is conceptualised in England and Greece. The main focus of the research questions was to seek stakeholders’ interpretations of the nature of IL in their high performing contexts. In this research, the interpretivist paradigm is prominent for the understanding of different ‘socially constructed realities’ (Blaikie, 2000: 25), which ‘*cannot* be [...] objective [, as they do not exist] irrespective of the meanings human beings bring to it [...]’ (Morrison, 2007: 27), while they are influenced by participants’ experiences and values. This paradigm stresses an inductive approach, focusing on the generation of theory from research (Bryman, 2008), through ‘a process for “making sense” of field data.’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 202)

Qualitative research, seeking to investigate how and why a social experience is created, is selected as the most appropriate research approach for meeting the purpose of this study, predominantly because of its exploratory nature, which has a data-theory (interpretive) stance. Another factor is the researcher’s ‘first hand’



exploration of the research setting, which suggests studying phenomena ‘in their natural settings’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008: 4). The use of case studies as a research approach, explained in the next section of this chapter, shows how the current research fits this paradigm.

## **Research Approaches**

Educational researchers generally choose one of the main research strategies below:

- experiments, which are measuring the effect of one variable on another (used for explanatory purposes)
- surveys (a descriptive study), and,
- case studies (often used for exploratory work).

The selection of research approaches is determined primarily by the research objectives and questions. Given that the current doctoral study has a qualitative stance in which the research questions are more exploratory (see chapter one), a qualitative case study design is chosen as it allows a detailed examination of the case and in-depth data to be collected on the four high performing secondary schools. In essence, the research focuses on exploring the nature of instructional leadership enacted within and across cultural contexts. This approach led to the choice of case studies as the preferred research approach.

This is in line with Yin’s (2009: 4) argument that ‘the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life

events- such as [...] small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes'. This links to Cohen et al.'s (2001: 181) point of '[...] recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects.' Indeed, having each school as the subject of an individual case study in a particular context created a platform for presenting the rich data generated from each case.

A multiple case design represents the most appropriate methodological approach for this study as it provides the framework for comparing and contrasting the cross-case and cross-country results derived from 'multiple-site case studies' (Bassey, 2007: 148), notably a series of four case studies in this research. Prominent comparative education researchers, such as Crossley and Vulliamy (1984), argue that research must be studied in relation to its wider policy context, and a case study approach is appropriate when comparing schooling in different countries.

Surveys would not have been a suitable approach, given that the current research required an in-depth investigation of instructional leadership in four schools not a survey of the research population to obtain generalizable data. Responding to the criticism that case studies do not enable scientific generalization, Yin (2009: 15) argues that

[...] case studies [...] are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study [...] does not represent a "sample", and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).

Multiple case-study is the design employed by the researcher in order to define the units of analysis, as discussed later in this chapter, while the cross-case

analysis of the four research case studies provided the potential for analytic generalisation, mainly through comparing them. Conclusions arising from a multiple case study are more powerful than those coming from a single case as ‘it improves theory building.’ (Bryman, 2008: 60) Similarly, Bassey (2007: 154) acknowledges the significance of case studies research into educational leadership and management issues under the umbrella of ‘theory-seeking/ theory testing studies which try to tease out why a situation is good, bad, or mediocre. This is the condition case study can make to educational leadership, which surveys cannot touch.’

The author’s research comprises four qualitative case studies, two HPSS in England and two HPSS in Greece. Each school is an individual case which illuminates the research questions with the purpose of examining if and how instructional leadership is practiced and whether it and how it links to student outcomes and school improvement in these four contexts.

## **Research Methods**

The needs of the inquiry have determined the choice of methods. Given that the methodology has a qualitative significance and the researcher’s aim was to investigate ‘from the inside’, without reflecting an objective reality<sup>16</sup>, the four case studies employed the following different methods to gather data (see figure 3.1):

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<sup>16</sup>Qualitative research regards theories as emergent, in that they arise from the collection and analysis of data. As a consequence, there cannot be an objective reality as this educational research is constructed from a subjective perspective. However, in this approach, objectivity is achieved through correlation of the findings and consensus, not by the selection of particular research methods.

- Scrutiny of national level policy documents and generic school documents, as classified in the next section. The national policy documents provide valuable information about the macro context and the intentions regarding leadership practices at secondary schools, while internal (school) and other external (subject advisers) documents record the micro context and culture indicating decisions and enacted practices related to the researched instructional leadership.
- Individual semi-structured interviews with eight subject teachers of each school to establish their views about the principal's involvement in instructional leadership practices.
- Semi-structured interviews with members of the SLT: the headteacher, one deputy head in each school, one assistant head for teaching and learning (only in school B), two external senior subject advisers (for Greece), two middle leaders (for England) and two most experienced subject teachers (for Greece) to provide an overview of managing teaching and learning and to establish whether and how they are responsible for implementing instructional leadership. Conducting interviews in three different data sets played an important role in cross-checking the validity of the findings.
- Observations took place through:
  - i. shadowing the school's principal (the deputy head in school A), with the purpose of making field notes on their leadership practices, in order to validate some findings emerged from other methods. As Coldren and Spillane (2007: 372) state, 'to completely understand instructional leadership as a practice, we

need to understand how leaders do what they do as well as the role of context in shaping what they do.’

- ii. observing meetings, regarded as significant for studies of leadership and management issues (Bush, 2007: 95); a leadership team meeting (in England), a leadership development day (only in school B), a school teachers’ association pedagogic meeting (in Greece).



**Figure 3.1:** *Data collection methods and process*

Figure 3.1 shows the researcher’s approach to data collection, which required a sequential investigation. This model, which was tested in the first pilot study of this research, fits the study’s purpose, as the multiple methods’ interaction and sequence of data collection enhanced the credibility of the findings.

The main overall aim of adopting a mixed methods approach for data collection is to obtain greater credibility for the results, since it requires combining several methods to answer the same research questions (Silverman, 2005; Bryman,

2008). Exploring the research questions using methodological and respondent triangulation in different education environments is considered an advantage, while cross-checking creates the platform for reliability. Adopting multiple methods also ensures that the limitations of one approach are addressed through the other methods.

### Scrutiny of documents

Following Bush's (2007:96) point that 'documentary analysis is an indispensable element in most case studies', and given the comparative dimension of this study, the documents were helpful for the author's research, as they provided valuable information about national and school contexts. The documents reviewed were classified as shown below:

- i. Official published documents such as recent Ofsted Inspection Reports and GCSE 2010 league tables, school staff lists, staff handbook, the school's prospectus 2010-2011, the school's newsletters, school website data (see more school level relevant documents in individual English case study reports)
- ii. Official statistics (list of one district schools' performance) of the Panhellenic examinations provided by the Directorate of Secondary Education in Athens, Educational Law 1566/85, 1304/82, 2525/97, Ministerial Decision 105657/2002, FEK 1340/2002, subject advisers generic documents (e.g., advisers' activities diaries, FD's three-month activities planning and a lesson plan for modelling an Ancient Greek lesson for Greek philologists at schools in Attiki; FC's guidelines to teachers for student evaluation, FC's teacher's performance report), school C and D teachers' committee pedagogical

meetings' minutes (see documents relevant to individual schools in the Greek case study reports).

As Cortazzi (2002: 196) points out, the texts used in a documentary analysis provide 'an aura of respectability' in which 'evidence of past and current realities of future plans' are evident, while they 'do not simply reflect reality, [but] they [...] construct it and contribute to subsequent views of it' (ibid: 197). Consequently, interpreting and analyzing documents 'frequently provide another window for the researcher to read between the lines of official discourse and then triangulate information through interviews, observations [...]' (Fitzgerald, 2007: 278) in order to draw conclusions about the evidence presented. This implies that documents should not be treated as objectively representative of the social context (Cortazzi, 2002; Rui, 2007), bearing in mind that the scrutinized policy documents show intentions, while external (e.g., OfSTED inspection reports, subject adviser's pedagogical documents) and internal documents may show subjectivity, perhaps for political reasons. In this case, authorship is mainly by Ofsted inspectors, school leadership teams (for England), and central governors, external and internal stakeholders (for Greece), which provide public accounts for a broad readership, mainly parents and school evaluators (for England) and the school and the Directorate of secondary education (for Greece).

This interpretive stance helped the researcher adopt a critical evaluation of the documents, in order to enhance credibility in the content analysis. The researcher undertook a content analysis of documents to identify the frequency and the significance of the concepts related to the research questions. A series of actions-coding and collating the data among documents- created the platform for

interpretation based on how internal documents were aligned to governmental documentary analysis data. This approach evidenced a gap between what appears in the internal and policy documents and instructional leadership practice in the four case studies (see chapters 4-7).

Published reports, such as school A and B's Ofsted inspection reports, have been a 'key source of research evidence' (McCulloch, 2004: 79) within the English context. In contrast, given that neither published statistical data on schools' performance nor any other publicly available documents are published in the Greek context, the researcher had to negotiate access to this 'protected information unavailable for public [...] access.' (Creswell, 2003: 186)

As Greek schools are not subject to formal evaluation, there are no official documents to show schools' performance. As a result, the researcher decided to define high-performing schools on the basis of students' results in the national examinations<sup>17</sup>.

### Individual interviews

Interviewing was the major research method, providing sufficient opportunities for participants to explain their understanding of the researched phenomenon. As shown in the case study reports (chapter four – chapter seven), the use of

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<sup>17</sup> Since there was no official measurement mechanism for school performance in the Greek setting, the researcher defined high-performing secondary schools for the purpose of this research, based on secondary school students' results in the Panhellenic exams, for two consecutive years, in order to ensure consistency and reliability in results. Although the researcher's intention was to take into consideration the school heads and subject advisers' annual reports in order to give a more complete picture on schools, she did not take them into consideration when selecting schools as they are not publicly available documents and also, when they were scrutinized, they were very generic, adding a little to school performance, given that the criteria were vague and inconsistent. The Greek schools' selection is referred as one of the limitations of this research (see chapter nine).



interviews is prominent and provided insights into participants' subjective interpretation of events in their schools (Seidman, 2006; Ribbins, 2007; Perakyla, 2008), influenced by their experiences and governmental imperatives.

The researcher conducted fifty-one in-depth face-to-face interviews, as a strategy to minimize the danger of bias in analysing participants' responses. The more commonalities emerged, the more possibilities for interpreting a more objective reality. The interviews with the internal (England and Greece) and external (only for Greece) leaders and teachers were undertaken on each school's premises, as well as in the Secondary Education Office in Greece, where the interviews with the district subject advisers were held.

The researcher adopted a 'semi-structured' interview approach, in which a series of open ended questions were used (see Appendix A). The use of semi-structured interviews<sup>18</sup> helped the interviewer to vary the sequence of questions, and to ask further questions in the form of prompts or probes. One of the main strengths of a semi-structured approach is that it offers adaptability and the possibility of modifying the respondent's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives and feelings in a way that postal questionnaires cannot (e.g. Robson, 2002; Wragg, 2002; Ribbins, 2007; Perakyla, 2008). Asking additional 'probe' questions ensured a more dynamic and in-depth deliberation within the parameters of each question. The researcher had the flexibility to adapt the questions in a way to provide for commonalities and

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<sup>18</sup> Although this research was conducted in two different countries entailing the use of two different languages, only one version of the interview schedule is enclosed in the Appendices. Following the length limitation of 5000 words (regulations for the submission of doctoral theses in Humanities and Social Sciences), the researcher included the whole interview schedule (instrument) for English principals and an extract from an interview transcript of a senior in one of the case schools.

differences to emerge within each context, and the participants were able to have a strong role in the progression of this discussion.

Semi-structured interviews were also well suited to the cross-country dimension of this study. This two country-research required flexibility in the nature of structure and the probing questions posed, in order to ensure that the contextual interpretations, and the micropolitics of the research context, emerged from the interviews.

### Observation

The third method used in this qualitative research was observations of key people and events. Observation is a strong research tool offering opportunities for findings to be validated through ‘observing the actors first hand’ (Bassey, 2007: 143) and the culture and social interactions within which the researched phenomenon is interpreted to be experienced (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Moyles, 2007).

The researcher, as a non-participant observer, shadowed the principals of all schools (except school A where the deputy head was observed), indicating the frequency of their IL activities, while other stakeholders’ contribution to the researched activities was also explored. The semi-structured observation schedule (see extract in Appendix B) provided the opportunity to categorise the wealth of data gathered, through noting a sequence of events under the predetermined themes, which are consistent with the IL dimensions adopted for this study. More specifically, in order to identify what proportion of time the

headteacher spent as an instructional leader, the researcher recorded the fieldnotes within a time matrix template by checking the box. Additional notes (see extract of the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Appendix B) were taken during the observation in relation to the main issues addressed in the interview questions.

The researcher also observed leaders' and teachers' meetings (see Appendix C) to seek a more 'holistic picture' of their interactions and the culture of the school (Moyles, 2007), along with the nature of instructional leadership in the four specific school contexts. This gave the researcher the opportunity to explore some issues that were not widely discussed by interviewees (e.g., the notion of peer-coaching by the head of school C and the associate head's modelling of teaching in a newly entered module in school B).

Observation has certain limitations. As Creswell (2003: 186) argues, 'the researcher may be seen as intrusive, the participants may have a different behavior on the day of the observation, which may confuse the researcher as it may contrast the other participants' views [...].' To address this problem, the author combined this method with other forms of data collection (see above).

Writing up field notes into a narrative account was done within a few hours of the field session so that it was a contemporaneous account. The observer's field notes included analysis of what had been done and reaction to what had been observed based on principals' behaviours and activities (Cohen et al., 2001; Lichtman, 2010), while the researcher also reflected on how these activities linked to interview records and documentary evidence.

## **Sampling**

Sampling took place in two phases; school and participants. The research was undertaken in four high performing schools in two dissimilar countries. The schools were sampled purposively to fit the researcher's criteria, those with outstanding performance, as explained in detail below. In respect of the participants, these were chosen purposively from those who could add value to the exploration of principal's instructional leadership.

### The sampling strategy

The researcher has decided to opt for a purposive sample against certain criteria. In this case it is the outstanding nature of secondary schools, which all schools have in common, in order to explore the similarities and differences among schools with similar characteristics across two countries. Cresswell (2003: 185) stresses that 'the idea behind qualitative research is to *purposefully* select participants or sites [...] that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question.' Purposive sampling provides a non-probability sample, selected to illuminate the phenomenon and address the research questions. The researcher's intention to focus on schools with outstanding performance was based on the assumption that instructional leadership affects students' outcomes.

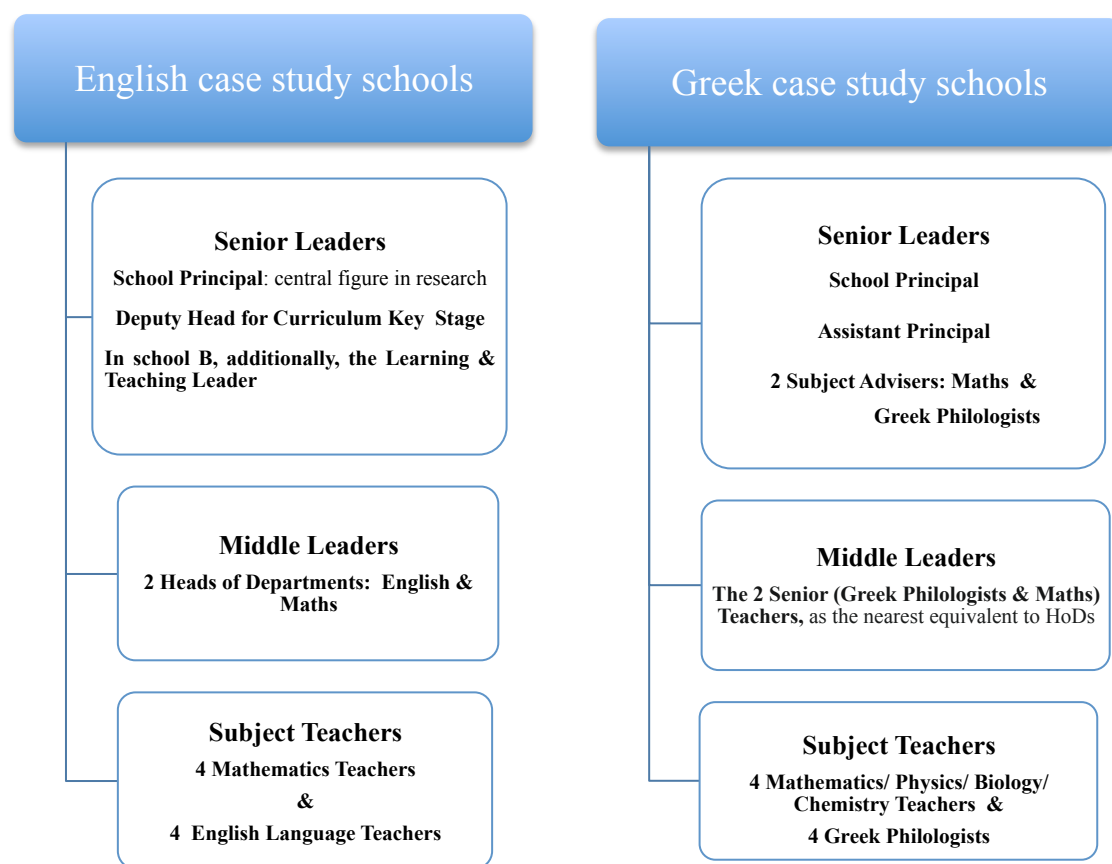
The choice of the two schools from among the larger group of outstanding schools in England is partly for geographical reasons. When the research was conducted, the researcher was living in West Midlands, Warwickshire. The

English schools' sample were chosen from those with 'outstanding' grades overall in the most recent OFSTED Inspection Reports within the geographical area of Midlands, alongside the 2010 examination results which placed them in the top 200 schools in the country in terms of GCSE examination results. Undoubtedly, the outstanding ratings by Ofsted are considered to be an objective criterion, in that they are based on consistent criteria.

The two Greek schools comprised the top schools from one district in the prefecture of Attiki (Athens) based on the published Pan-hellenic school examination results showing the proportion of students who entered Greek Schools of Higher Education (University and Technological Education Institutions), for two consecutive years. As Greek schools are not subject to external evaluation, the researcher decided to use the national exam results as the only objective basis for determining 'high performance', while student results were considered to be a variable associated with effective schools. However, among all the thirteen Prefectural Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education in Greece that the researcher contacted, only one Directorate provided her with a list of schools, which portray the school results at a national level.

Figure 3.2 shows the sample within and across (only for Greece) the researched schools. Apart from the school principal, who is the central figure in the research, the researcher has purposively chosen the assistant principal (Greece), and the Deputy Head who is responsible for the Curriculum at Key Stage 4 (England), while in both countries, additional senior leaders were included. In the case of Greece, the researcher included two external senior leaders – the Maths and Greek Philologists' subject advisers of the researched educational directorate-

who are entitled by Greek law to be the pedagogical leaders in their subject areas. In school B, the learning and teaching leader's role has been enhanced in the teachers' interviews and the researcher decided to include her, in order to make sure that this research gives a clear picture of the instructional leadership actors in school B.



**Figure 3.2:** *Within and across school sampling*

The researcher also included eight subject teachers - four mathematics teachers and four first language teachers - as English and mathematics are core subjects in the English National Curriculum. The matching sample in the Greek schools comprised four teachers of the Greek language and four mathematics teachers. The two Heads (HoDs) of the above mentioned departments were also included in the English sample. In Greece, there are no Heads of Departments, so the

researcher decided to select the senior Greek Literacy teacher as well as the senior Maths teacher as the nearest equivalents to HoDs.

## **Designing Research Instruments**

The use of qualitative multiple sources of data required careful construction of the interview and observation instruments, to ensure reliable and valid data collection and analysis.

### Interview schedules

As noted earlier, semi structured interviews gave the opportunity for the research questions to be studied in depth within a relatively limited time scale. A semi-structured interview schedule ‘entails the researcher broadly controlling the agenda and process of the interview, while leaving interviewees free, within limits, to respond [...]’ (Ribbins, 2007: 209) The interview schedules (see Appendix A) show the extent of structure in the interviews. Its semi-structured nature covered a broad spectrum, ‘allow[ing] respondents to express themselves at some length, but offer[ing] enough shape to prevent aimless rambling.’ (Wragg, 1994: 272-273)

As the first pilot study took place in an English school, the researcher constructed a series of English interview schedules, targeted at different participant groups, as the basis for data gathering. The interview schedules were derived from the research questions and the literature on instructional leadership. The interview schedules were consistent with previous research, notably the Principals’

Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Blasé & Blasé (1999a), Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS (OECD, 2009a).

The interview schedule (see Appendix A) covers introductory questions, list of topic headings (ibid, A-D), and closing comments (ibid, E). More specifically, the first part of the interview schedule dealt with background and personal information as well as introductory questions. The major part is designed to help participants to articulate their views and attitudes to implementing instructional leadership in terms of the impact to student outcomes and teacher's performance. As noted above, the semi-structured interview questions were linked to the research questions and were designed to consider:

- the relationship between principal's instructional leadership and school improvement,
- the level of interaction between principal's instructional strategies and its influence on student outcomes,
- the relationship between instructional leadership and teachers' performance, and,
- the mechanisms for implementing instructional leadership within high performing schools.

The instrument was designed with unbiased open-ended questions, ranging from general to specific, while the use of prompts and probes helped the researcher to enhance interviewees' understanding on notions that may be confusing (e.g.,



vision for learning) and to expand on interviewees' responses. Given that leadership is contextual and cultural specific, the researcher's semi-structured interview schedule was designed to create a more contextual based platform for exploring instructional leadership.

The schedule design for senior, middle leaders, and teachers was based on the principal's interview schedule, while relevant modifications were made to suit each data set separately. This is an example of how the following question for the principal (see Appendix A, D1 section):

*In case of students' variation of performance, what is the strategy for improvement?*

[Prompt: How do you address the underperformance of: Students? Teachers? Department?]

was constructed to be similar to the above question but not necessarily identical for the English middle leader :

- *Do you compare examination results of each teacher? If yes, how do you use the data for improving teacher's performance?*

while, also, translated and modified for the external school leaders in Greece:

- *Do you compare schools' national exam results in your subject area across your district schools? If yes, how do you address the 'across the schools' variation of students' performance in relation to teachers' pedagogical improvement?*

This example illustrates that certain changes have been applied in order to increase the comparability of findings across the studies.

### *Administration of the interviews*

In planning data collection, the researcher was flexible to fit in with the school's plans and follow the research timetable allocated by both deputy heads (for the English schools) and headteachers (for Greek schools). Also, the interviews with the Greek subject advisers were arranged in consultation with them. The interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Interviewees were assured of anonymity and the use of two voice recorders –in case recording equipment failed- was subject to the participants' agreement. However, detailed note taking during the interview was used to supplement recording in the case of DC3 who declined the use of the recorder. This interview was extended by ten minutes (the average time was 50 minutes) as the interviewer had to keep detailed notes to ensure that the main issues were covered, concentrating on the respondent's words and probing further if necessary. Making sure that quotations could be derived from a later content analysis, the researcher maximized the accuracy of data. Interviews were conducted in the Greek language in the Greek schools, as the interviewees were not very competent in the English language. The researcher translated all the Greek interviews into English.

### Observation schedules

The framework for observation consists of the activities involved in the researched leadership model, showing consistency in themes among the research methods, while there was also room for the observer's comments. Conducting a

series of observations in each school required the development of a Matrix observation framework for shadowing principals (see Appendix B <sup>19</sup>), which was guided by a central question:

- *What proportion of his/ her time does the principal devote as instructional leader as opposed to management focused activities?*

This helped the researcher to answer the sub- research question ‘i’, ‘*Whether, and to what extent, English and Greek principals are instructional leaders?*’, combined with data gathered from the interviews.

In regard to the development of the SLT meeting observation schedule, the aim was to identify the proportion of time that the Senior Leadership Team devotes to discussing issues with an instructional leadership orientation. In contrast to the consistent themes of the principal’s shadowing day, the meeting observations (see Appendix C) led to field notes linked to four key questions:

- What is taking place? (themes)
- Who is taking part in the meeting?
- How do the participants approach the issues in the agenda?
- What is being discussed frequently?

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<sup>19</sup> Due to the limitations of length in the Appendices, the researcher decided to add the principal’s observation schedule, as constructed for England. These instruments were only translated in Greek for the Greek cases, as they covered the same themes, in order to ensure common coverage of the researched issues. However, the SLT meeting observation schedule in the Appendices follows a contextualised agenda. The observation schedules would be an adequate source and a good example of how the researcher dealt with observation themes.

## **Piloting**

Different contexts can affect the ways in which case studies are carried out but piloting is helpful in minimizing problems in subsequent schools. Piloting the research instruments gave the researcher the opportunity ‘to refine [her] data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed.’ (Yin, 2009: 92) This helped to ensure an effective design and appropriate fieldwork procedure, to enhance research validity. Before the pilot was undertaken, the interview schedules were pre-tested with people familiar with both the English and Greek schools’ contexts.

In this cross-country comparative study, the first case study in each country was treated as a de facto pilot. All participants were asked similar questions addressing the same issues but differentiated for different respondent groups, prepared in English and translated into Greek for the Athens case studies. Question wording was not straightforward for both countries and careful piloting was necessary to ensure that all questions meant the same to all research participants in England and Greece. Piloting the interview questions and the observation schedule helped the researcher ‘ensur[e] that the research instruments as a whole [function] well.’ (Bryman, 2008: 247)

As a consequence, all the data were analysed before subsequent case studies were conducted. Once the pilot interviews were carried out, and the interview transcriptions analysed to examine whether the questions provided relevant data, the researcher made minor amendments. Assessing the strengths of the interview schedule, the categorisation of questions by themes helped the interview to have

a sequence, keep the interviewees' focus on particular aspects, while it worked efficiently for the first phases of data analysis. In light of a more complete picture of outcomes, the researcher decided to revise some questions so as to provide a balance on issues related to principal's IL and other potential instructional leaders in schools. The pilot exercise, also, guided the researcher to make changes in the observation focus, which have been considered as 'weaknesses in technique.' (Bell, 2005:194) Piloting the research instruments contributed to the improvement of the schedule before the main research took place.

## **Access and Ethics**

### Access to the participants

An important consideration for qualitative researchers is arranging access to research sites. Prior to the data collection, official approval was sought from the 'gatekeeper'. In Greece, the researcher sought access to the schools, by applying to the Ministry of Education (June 2010) and providing all the necessary documents<sup>20</sup> in order to secure access. The researcher also needed to achieve approval from the Head of the Directorate of Education after showing him/her the Official letter from the researcher's department. When permission was obtained (November 2010), the Ministry of Education sent a letter to each approved school, explaining what the researcher is doing and why. However, it was the researcher's responsibility to obtain the school's consent (see Appendix

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<sup>20</sup> The documents include the interview schedule (in Greek), a supporting letter from the University, a list of three schools for which access is sought, and a research proposal, mentioning the objectives of the research, the proposed methods and methodology, research instruments, identifying the extent of time, the potential impact, and the outcomes of the research, as well as the completion of an ethic form.

D) and as a consequence, the researcher had a meeting with each school headteacher to inform them about the nature and scope of the research (Bryman, 2008: 407).

Access in England is via the headteacher of each school and not the local bureaucracy. The researcher sent an electronic (email) official letter (Appendix E) requesting permission, stating the aims of this research and the importance of this study, as the means to get access in English HPSS. Similarly to the Greek cases, the researcher was invited for an introductory meeting with the deputy heads (England), where the research procedures were discussed, and staff lists were provided by the head in order to select her sample. Once the researcher had chosen her sample, an electronic consent letter was sent to the principal's assistant with the purpose of distributing it accordingly. The researcher also obtained a letter of support from the University (Appendix F), which was shown as evidence to the gatekeepers. In the Greek case, this letter was officially translated.

### Ethics

An ethical approach to research is crucial. As Clough and Nutbrown (2007: 173) suggest,

ethical practices are central to social science research, and decisions about research questions, participants, publication, methods, analysis and so on are all taken with due regard to ethical judgements about what is 'right' and the importance of avoiding harm to participants or as a result of the study.

Whilst research is ethically sensitive to the ‘search for knowledge and [...] the subjects [it] depends on’ (Cohen et al., 2001: 56), this research adhered to all the ethical guidelines laid down by the University, including treating all documents and interview responses as confidential, as required in the ethical approval form for research degrees obtained by the University of Warwick.<sup>21</sup>

Given that ‘ethical issues can arise at [various research stages, e.g.,] planning, implementation and reporting’ (Gray, 2005: 58), the main ethical issues to be addressed before embarking on the research were:

- informed consent
- confidentiality
- anonymity
- not harming participants,

These issues are discussed below.

A key principle for constructing ethical research is that of voluntarism by the participants when engaging with research (ESRC, 2005). This is manifested by the interviewees giving their informed and explicit consent, free from coercion or bribery, to take part in a study (ESRC, 2005: 7). Getting the informed consent of the participants was achieved through providing the interviewees with a formal covering letter and an informed consent form, as mentioned above, in which the research procedures and participants’ rights were acknowledged. It is important

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<sup>21</sup> Due to the 5000 words limitation in the Appendices, the researcher decided not to include the Ethical Approval Form for Research Degrees, which was obtained by the University of Warwick (July 2010), as this document comprises 3228 words.

to note that participants' right to obtain a copy of their words, for member checking, has been activated by two Greek research participants: one internal interviewee (school C) and one external (FD), who validated their words before data analysis was undertaken.

Following the ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2004: 8), 'the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research.' Three main approaches have been adopted by the researcher in order to ensure maintaining confidentiality of the research setting. Anonymity (explained later in the chapter) precedes data protection and data interpretation approaches.

A way to protect individual participants' and schools' privacy is through ensuring that no information will be publicly available and assuring the interviewees that the researcher is the only person to have access to raw data. Protection of data records (e.g., documents, interview transcriptions) and case study reports was achieved through storage in electronic files which required security codes, while any hardcopies have been stored in an invisible place at the researcher's premises. The data will be kept for ten years<sup>22</sup>, following collection, and then they will be discarded.

Another principle of ethical behaviour was related to data interpretation, while some issues emerged that call for good ethical decisions. Also, the researcher

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<sup>22</sup> The main reason for such a decision is related to the fact that the researcher aspires to publish after this thesis submission, and access to her available data would be beneficial in case of justifying the results if a researcher challenges it.



decided the level of generality in her study, so that details of schools and participants, as given in the case study reports, would not identify the research site and participants. The use of pseudonyms for participants and places protected research identities, and this is linked to anonymity, described below. However, this could not be achieved in the case of headteachers, who can be easily recognised. The non-identification of the schools provides a degree of protection but this is not absolute.

In relation to confidentiality, writing up research has been carried out within an ethical framework, in a way that the presentation of results was treated with strict confidence, respecting participants' privacy. The ethical issues extended into the language used, which was not biased against any of the persons involved in terms of their gender, ethnic group, age or disability (Bryman, 2008).

Another major issue is anonymity, which maintains research privacy by anonymising names and places, while any other personal data are not used. Participants' real names were replaced by letters (A, B, C, D etc) so as to prevent disclosure of identities. A consistent anonymity strategy has been used in all case study reports. More specifically, all headteachers were given the letter 'A', while the second letter joining each participant's pseudonym reveals the school's pseudonym name<sup>23</sup>. Accordingly, the mathematics hub was given the letter 'C', while 'D' was used for language teachers.

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<sup>23</sup> A=for a faith-based comprehensive school in England, B= for a National Support school in England, C= for a comprehensive school in Greece, D=for a model/experimental school in Greece.

The last ethical issue that the researcher tackled before the fieldwork was to ensure that participants were not harmed. Protecting participants from harm is related to protecting them from violation of privacy (confidentiality and anonymity). The researcher made sure that no exploration of the settings took place without permission, given the fact that the research cases were schools comprising children and other stakeholders. The research sites were also left undisturbed, as both the interviews and observations were held with discretion. The obligation of the researcher to avoid causing harm<sup>24</sup> is evidenced in EC1's and one more research participant's<sup>25</sup> interviews. Respecting EC1's rights, the researcher gave her agreement for the interview to be paused, as it was interrupted by a parental meeting with the teacher. However, in the post-parental meeting phase of interview, the researcher treated the interviewee with an ethical consideration in mind, as EC1 felt vulnerable (crying) when the interview focus was on evaluating student results. Once the researcher confirmed that this reaction was not due to a 'threatening' question, but linked to EC1's sensitive attitude towards the researched theme, in relation to the incident with the parent, they did not continue the interview on that day. However, they negotiated agreement on the best time for completing the interview.

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<sup>24</sup> According to Busher (2002: 83), harm 'includes psychological pressure as well as physical danger.'

<sup>25</sup> To ensure confidentiality, the pseudonym is not provided here. However, in case of research interest the incident is described below: The researcher was cautious in using a senior research participant's interview quotations as s/he had a critical stance towards the head's role in that school. The tone was rather judgemental. In order to minimize the harm done to this participant, after this research publication, these words were not used as they were not well justified, triangulated with other participants' views and some of them were out of this research scope.

## Data Collection

A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use ‘*multiple sources of evidence*’ (Gray, 2005: 129) which led to the collection of rich data.

This section discusses the practicalities of data collection. Convenience and geographic proximity were the criteria for collecting data within the English system first, as long as terms of practicalities have been occurred. As soon as the researcher passed her upgrade to PhD study, she started her pilot case in England as she was in the UK during that period. The time allocated for each case took between one and two weeks in order to explore all the issues that set the objectives of this research, as the researcher was doing a first phase of analysis during the fieldwork period. The researcher also allowed enough space between the cases so that she was able to transcribe the interviews (see extracts of an interview in Appendix G), write the observation reports and process coding of the material collected from each case before moving on to the next case study research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For example, the pilot study was on Weeks 3 and 4 in October 2010, the second case took place in Week 3 and 4 in November.

However, publicly available documents along with some other internal documents had been provided by the deputy heads prior to the interviews, while others were collected throughout the fieldwork. It is important to note, though, that negotiating access to collecting internal documents was time consuming, in the Greek case as all the bureaucratic procedures had to be processed. What is considered as a benefit for Lincoln and Guba (1985: 276), ‘almost always *available* [in italics in the original text], on a low-cost (mostly investigator time)

or free basis', has been reversed in the Greek schools data collection. Seeking permission from the school heads to quote particular sections, evaluating the documents' relevance (e.g., what to include) for analysis within a limited amount of time in the headteacher's office, along with the handwritten reproduction (not permitted to be reproduced in hard copies) and the translation process, all added in the complexities of the documentary collection.

The data collection timetable deliberately allowed two weeks space between the pilot case study and the second case to have the flexibility and the time to make any necessary changes in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the research.

## **Reliability, Validity and Triangulation**

Validity and reliability have been addressed extensively in the literature (e.g. Cohen et al., 2001; Bell, 2005; Gray, 2005; Bush, 2007; Bryman, 2008) as they relate to accuracy and data consistency.

### Validity

Validity is seen as a potential strength of qualitative research<sup>26</sup> and it is used to assess 'whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon that it is intended to describe' (Bush, 2007: 97). Adopting Yin's (2009: 40) three main criteria to judge the quality of research design, the researcher ensured:

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<sup>26</sup> However, there is a view stressing that the notion of trustworthiness is more associated with qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Bassey, 1999).

- construct validity via a use of multiple sources of evidence during the data collection phase [in order to show the relation between the theoretical concept of IL and the researcher's observations for drawing conclusions. Triangulation, described later in this chapter, is believed to enhance validity of the research findings.]
- internal validity via pattern matching, [...] at the data analysis phase,
- external validity via using replication logic in multiple-case studies, at the research design.

From the data collection stage of this enquiry, it was the researcher's intention to ensure validity throughout the questions used to elicit information from the participants, as these are the most effective ones in order to provide an in-depth description, where 'a particular set of results [can be generalizable] to a broader theory' (Yin, 2009: 43). Acknowledging the limitations of generalisations in qualitative research, the degree to which this research could provide potential for generalization is related to the similarities in the findings of the two cross-case case studies. Bassey's (1999: 12) 'fuzzy' generalization, which implies 'what was found in the singularity [to] be found in similar situations elsewhere', has arisen as a notion in contrast to statistical generalisation.

Another important technique that the researcher employed in establishing credibility is 'peer debriefing' (Lincoln and Cuba, 1985). For the purpose of this study, the researcher established a critical debriefing relationship with a peer whose role was mainly to judge this work and make suggestions for further

consideration, as he has a good understanding of both leadership and methodology.

### Reliability

Reliability concerns the consistency of results in case of repeating the procedure with the same research methods (Cohen et al., 2001). However, Bush (2007: 95) raises an important point that ‘the increasing recognition that each school provides a distinctive context for practicing school leadership increases the difficulties involved in seeking reliability in interview research.’ In order to address this issue in the current study, the researcher designed a well-constructed case study protocol. The development of a case study protocol helped the researcher to ensure consistency across the four schools involved in the research. The researcher was influenced by Yin’s (2009) example of a case study protocol, which captures:

- the procedures for making field work arrangements, and
- an agenda of general rules to be addressed during the data collection stage.

She designed her own template (appendix H), to guide case study planning agenda in order to increase ‘the *reliability* of case study research’ when doing a multiple-case study. (ibid:79)

Adopting a mixed methods approach in this research minimized any reliability problems, as triangulation enabled the comparison of the outcomes from each method. Also, piloting the research methods of the first case study in each country was one way of testing the quality of the research instruments in order to enhance reliability of this research within each country.

The construction of semi-structured instruments (interviews and observations) in case studies may lead to reservations as ‘it is more difficult to ensure reliability using unstructured or semi-structured interviews because of the deliberate strategy of treating each participant as a potentially unique respondent.’ (Bush, 2007: 95) In the case of interviews, for instance, the researcher compromised the potential for reliability by revising interview questions where necessary. In order to develop reliable questions, the researcher added standardised prompts, in each country pilot study, so that the questions could be understood in the same way by each participant, within the four different cases. The use of structured probes in the interview questions to ensure consistency when replicating the research in a similar distinctive school context (e.g. national support school, model school), has been considered as an important tool for ensuring cross-country comparability, while acknowledging that a strong focus on reliability may serve to limit validity (Bush, 2007).

The concept of reliability in documentary analysis is strengthened through using primary sources (McCulloch, 2004) of all the internal and external representative documents, which have been produced for a purpose unrelated to the research (e.g. organizational use). The external documents (only in Greece) were based on governmental sources which could be re-analysed by other researchers, while the internal documents in both England and Greece were helpful in cross-checking data from other methods.

Observational research is particularly challenging in terms of reliability because of the overarching question of whether reality would have been seen differently

in different occasions. This was addressed through seeking the stability of the observations, the observer's focus on the phenomena and minimising the observer's subjectivity (Brock-Utne, 1996: 614-615). A semi-structured observation schedule with a clear focus in all SLT meetings, principal's shadowing and any other observations held in the research settings, 'help[ed the researcher] to avoid being distracted by other phenomena but this can only be partly successful.' (Bush, 2007: 95)

The researcher acknowledges the limitation of instability as the most important obstacle in her cross-case studies. For example, the observations in the English schools were made at a time where there was a strong emphasis on both school's conversion into Academies while, in Greece, they took place during the pre-examination period. In both cases, the agenda and the focus of activities may have been different at a different time. The researcher observed and recorded the data in an as objective way as possible, but it was not possible to eliminate all her subjective thoughts about the data.

### Triangulation

Employing a multiple methods approach to collect data enhances triangulation which 'is essentially a means of cross checking data to establish its validity.' (Bush, 2007: 100) While using more than two sources of evidence is a strength of case study collection (Yin, 2009), research bias is also likely to be reduced, as a wider picture of reality is shaped through 'looking at things from different angles and exploring different understandings' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In the current research, the researcher adopted both methodological and respondent



triangulation, in order to ensure that validity has been sought. In each case study, methodological triangulation has been achieved through the multiple methods of data collection adopted, while the four different data sets (the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers) provide respondent triangulation.

The main advantage of respondent triangulation is in accessing people's views in different positions. Indeed, senior leaders' perspectives could only be confirmed through middle leaders' and teachers' perspectives. Consistency between data sets and methods was problematic in some cases in this cross-case research. A striking example of inconsistency between different research methods concerns the differences in how policy is implemented in practice. The evidence in the Greek educational law policy documents contrasts with the research participants' views, notably about subject advisers' role and their contribution to pedagogical leadership. There was a high level of inconsistency between what is done in practice (evidenced through observations and interviews), and policy intentions. As a consequence, exploring the truth requires triangulation at the data collection stage in order to enrich understanding in the data analysis stage.

## **Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis contributes to assessing the validity of research findings. Secondary sources, such as OfSTED Inspection Reports, policy documents, were analysed ahead of school-based field work, and this analysis helped to shape the next steps in the data collection process, taking account of the research questions. Primary sources, such as interview transcripts and

observation field notes, were analysed following data collection. Conducting data analysis was an ongoing process, which took place throughout the research process. Whilst the emphasis, for individual schools, was on triangulation in order to draw conclusions about IL in each case study school, comparative analysis across the cases was the most important focus, as the nature of this thesis suggests.

Qualitative research uses an inductive strategy in data analysis, as the medium of gaining new insights into research data. Exploring reality from a qualitative research stance, and an interpretive approach, generated an interest in grounded theory. The researcher followed Miles and Huberman's<sup>27</sup> (1994: 9) framework for conceptualizing data analysis and their grounded theory coding. This gave space to the researcher to process all the data using a constant comparison approach (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), 'assur[ing] that all data produced [were] analyzed rather than potentially disregarded on thematic grounds.' (O'Connor et al., 2008: 41)

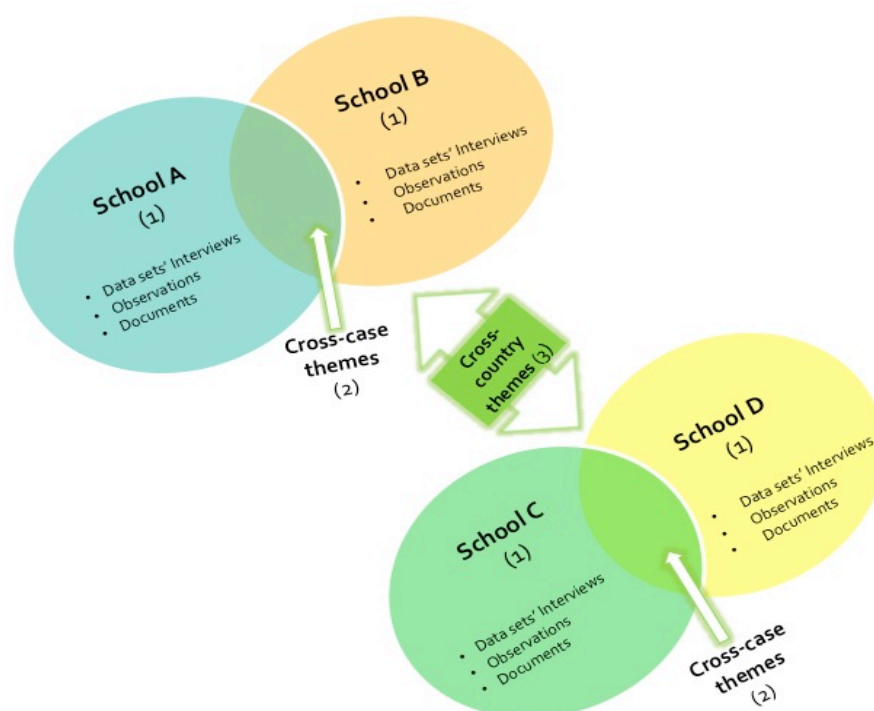
As Figure 3.3 illustrates, each of the four researched schools was the subject of an individual case study, compiling individual case study reports (see chapters four to seven), which are considered 'ideal for providing the "thick description" thought to be so essential for enabling transferability judgments. The case report is, at its best, a "portrayal" of a situation.' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 214) In addition, the study as a whole covers several schools and in this way uses a multiple case design. The technique that applies to the analysis of multiple cases

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<sup>27</sup> The Miles and Huberman (1994: 9) approach to qualitative data analysis consists of : data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing.

is cross-case synthesis, treating each individual case study as a separate study. It is important to acknowledge Crossley and Vulliamy's (1984: 204) point that case studies should 'not be limited to the micro-level; and [...] need not ignore comparative analysis itself'. Consequently, the researcher included the macro policy picture –through governmental policy documents analysis- in the Greek case study reports because of the centralised nature of the Greek education system.

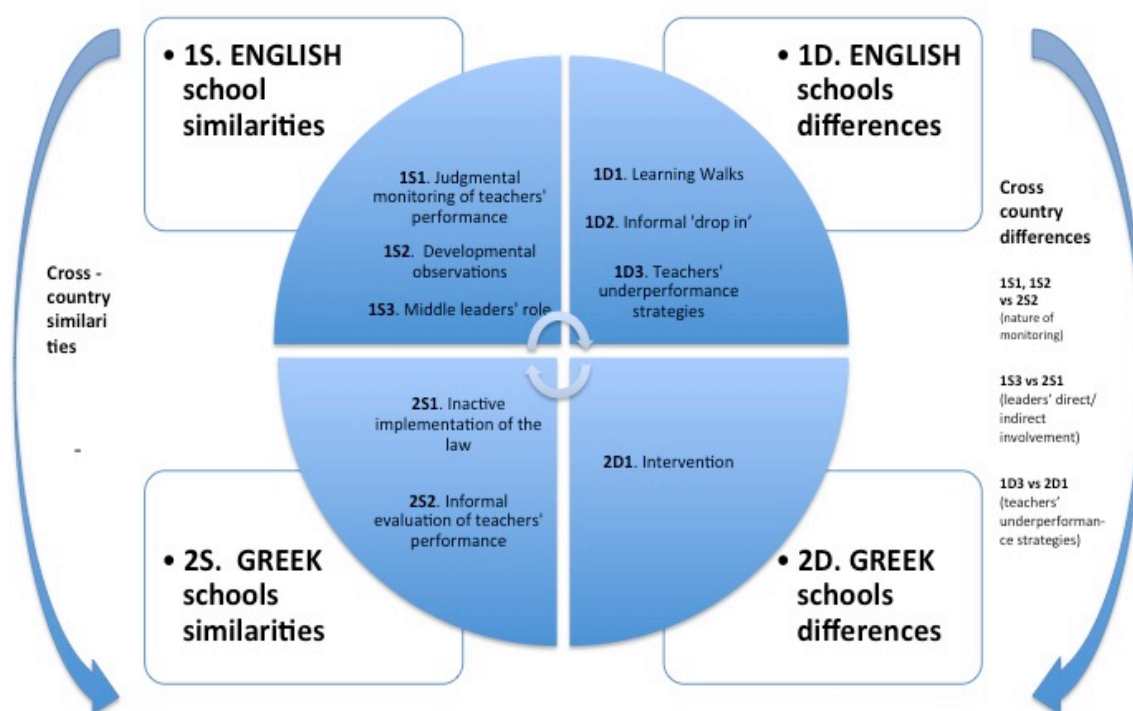
Comparing data sets involved three tiers of analysis, which the researcher shows in Figure 3.3. The first tier operates under the two parallel clusters (in terms of country) of schools, in which codes (1) are categorized based on the school contextual situation (within the school coding) across different methods' data sets. The second tier consists of clusters of codes (2) which have been recognized as meaningful in both schools in the same country, while this coding entails the emergence of a discussion on complexities, interactions and level of differentiation in two different school in the same country (between 2 schools). A cross-country themes tier (3) highlights the common and different themes which emerged from a cross-country comparative analysis of data.



**Figure 3.3:** *Cross-case analysis process*

The researcher followed the same methodological framework of data collection and analysis for the English and Greek data sets, while they were separately coded through the patterns dictated by the interview schedule questions and the observation schedule (pre-coding). The pre-coding framework led the researcher's thoughts about how data were to be interpreted through themes (Seale, 2000; Silverman, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2007), based on the identification of contextual and inter-relational conditions within and across the cases. Adopting Piantanida et. al.'s (2004: 338) viewpoint that '[c]omparing the codes [...] allow[ed] us to identify key concepts that we would offer as an interpretation of the phenomenon under study', this cross case comparative analysis required a structured comparison of the themes linked to instructional leadership practices within and across countries.

Since this study is ‘*comparative* and, ultimately, [its] aim is, in the analytical stage, to compare like-with-like’ (Troman and Jeffrey, 2007: 516), comparability has been achieved through following concepts consistently within the framework of the IL model (e.g. coaching, modelling). The researcher’s interpretations of data shape the codes in grounded theory, which then develop the cross-case themes as shown in Figure 3.4, under ‘Monitoring’.



**Figure 3.4:** *Cross-case comparative analysis- themes emergence phase in 'Monitoring'*

A thematic level of analysis grounded the research process within the contextual framework of the research inquiry. As Figure 3.4 shows, aggregating the data in terms of similarity- themes (1S, 2S) and difference-themes (1D, 2D) creates a

platform for further methodological comparison based on consistencies discerned in the various group sets' data.

The next step for a constant comparison was the development of a three-layer comparative framework within an interpretivist paradigm, in which the interplays<sup>28</sup> (illustrated by arrows) between policy, educational actors and IL practices are analysed within and across the cases. As shown in Figure 3.5, the comparative base of analysis<sup>29</sup> within two contrasting educational systems is captured within three vertical levels:

1. the educational system policy and institutional culture
2. the IL actors
3. the leadership for learning elements within the school,

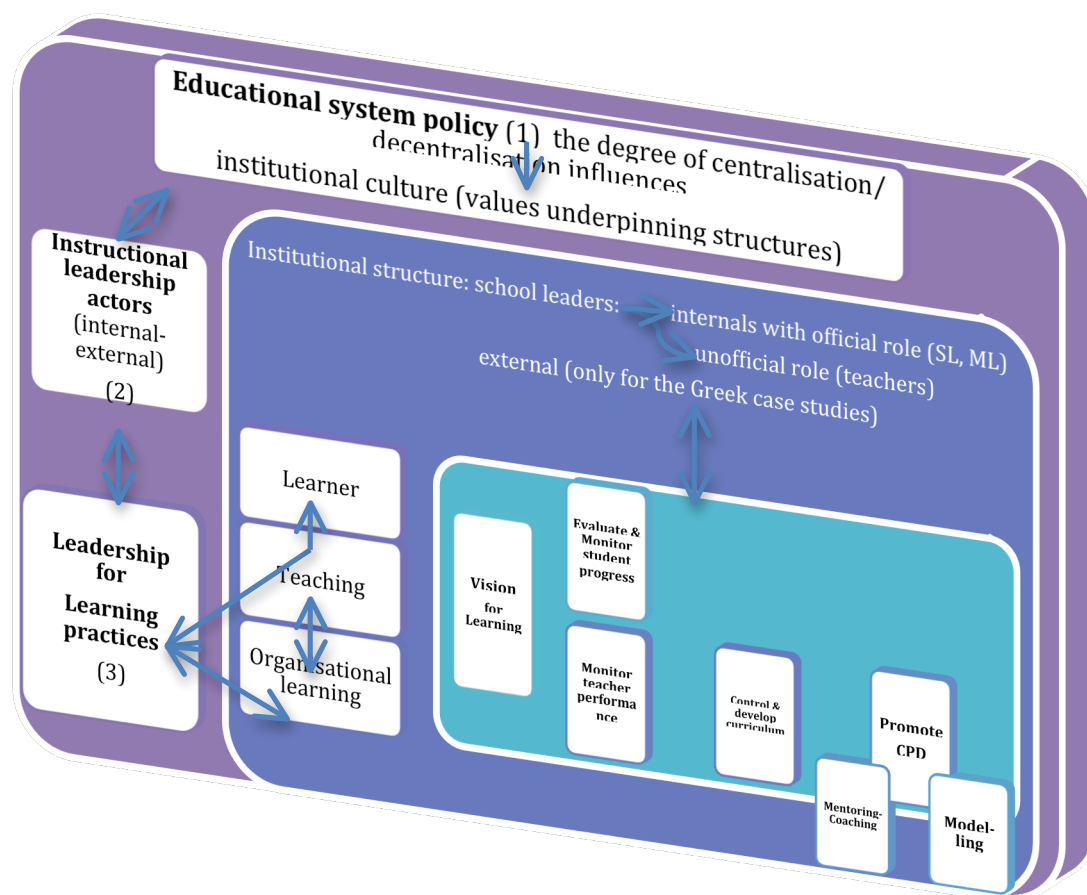
which are then analysed under a nested layers approach (horizontal), illustrating:

1. Relationship with / influence on the institutional culture,
2. Interaction and roles,
3. IL practices in a school context

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<sup>28</sup> Given that leadership is sensitive to context, the researcher, influenced by Dimmock's (2007) conceptualization of comparing educational organisations, created a framework for a macro and micro comparative approach in which the 'interrelationships between different levels of systems' (p. 285) are explored.

<sup>29</sup> The conceptualization of the cross case comparative framework includes features of Hofstede (1984) and Dimmock and Walker's (1998a) models in regard to culture and cross-cultural school focused elements, respectively.



**Figure 3.5:** *A cross case comparative framework for analysis*

The cross-case analysis of the entire collection of case studies led the researcher to draw conclusions based on a comparative design. Synthesising each country's contextual data analysis with themes which reflect homogeneity and heterogeneity, led to a comparative analysis of the two data sets (*Comparing Greece - Comparing English*), reflecting the macro and micro context, as described in chapter eight.

Generating knowledge grounded in the qualitative data obtained in HPSS provides a medium to obtain a fresh perspective (for England) and a new conceptual understanding (for Greece) on instructional leadership theory and practice. The researcher utilised a conceptual perspective to empirical findings

obtained through comparing different data sets and interpreting plausible relationships and variations in the patterns. However, the researcher does not claim that she applied grounded theory per se, but by ‘borrowing from grounded theory’ (Hammond and Wellington, 2013: 86), she recognizes the limitations of theorization from a small-scale study, while the use of ‘pre-existing theoretical ideas and assumptions’ (Robson, 2002: 192) may challenge the theoretical significance.

## **Overview**

This chapter outlines the qualitative research methodology employed in this study, in order to create the appropriate methodological strategy guided by the research questions. Multiple methods were used because a number of different research questions needed different approaches in order to be fully and appropriately explored. Methodological and respondent triangulation ensured that the strengths and weaknesses of each data collection method were counter-balanced, with respect to enhancing the credibility of this comparative study. The cross-case framework, which was designed as a platform for a three-layered comparison, influenced the interpretation of the findings, while the interactions of data collection and data analysis contributed to the development of a grounded theory model.

The next four chapters (4-7) present the findings of the individual case studies, while the nature of IL stakeholders’ contribution to school improvement is answered. The themes emerging from the individual cases are then synthesized and compared in chapter eight.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDY REPORT**

### **SCHOOL A**

#### **Introduction**

School A is a large faith-based comprehensive school within the West Midlands, with 1400 pupils and 140 staff, led by the headteacher (AA) who has been in the post for a year. It was rated ‘outstanding’ in the most recent Ofsted inspection report (February 2010) and was also ranked in the top 200 schools in the country for its 2010 GCSE examination results.

#### **Methodological Considerations**

This case study followed the pattern set out for the whole enquiry (see chapter 3). More specifically, the research methods within this case study, involved the followings:

- Scrutiny of documents: apart from the documents that are common in the two English case studies (see Chapter 3), the researcher also scrutinized the school development plan and post Ofsted action plan (Spring 2010), secondary school self-evaluation form (SEF, February 2010), minutes of four SLT meetings.
- Semi-structured interviews with the headteacher (AA), the deputy head (BA) responsible for teaching and learning and two more members of the Senior Leadership Team, the head of maths (CA) and the head of English (DA).
- Semi-structured interviews with eight subject teachers, four Mathematics teachers (CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4) and four English teachers (DA1, DA2, DA3, DA4).

- Shadowing the deputy head for half a day as the headteacher was not available. Also, shadowing the deputy head in the line management process with the curriculum learning manager of the science department.
- Observation of a SLT meeting.

## **Findings**

### Vision for Learning

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The school's strategic development plan shows the intention to create a caring atmosphere in which achievement is valued, praised and all are encouraged to develop their abilities to the full, by providing high quality 'Education with Care' (School Prospectus 2010-2011).

The vision of what the school is trying to accomplish is translated in the strategic plan into goals that have measurable outcomes. According to the SEF, the leadership team ensures that personalized learning strategies are given priority. At the departmental level, 'although the HoD gives a strong lead, staff are involved and appreciate being involved in most decision making processes, e.g. determining departmental aims and prioritizing limited financial resources.' (Maths department SEF: 25)

#### *Findings from interviews*

Both the headteacher and the deputy head stated that they have made a contribution to the development of this school's vision. The deputy head said 'I've made a contribution to it. I think the vision of the school is stronger than

when I arrived and my role is to maintain that vision, perhaps by enriching the curriculum to strengthen the vision.’ Both members of the SLT (BA, DA) claimed that the vision is discussed, and then cascaded down to the whole staff. According to the headteacher, all staff and governors had the opportunity to contribute to a consultation analysis in September 2009 which has formed the basis of the school’s improvement plan.

The interviews with subject teachers showed that the great majority were aware of the school’s vision for learning, that all students achieve their full potential. DA4, an English teacher, supported the view that ‘vision is a concept that is discussed a lot, for example at a recent INSET day’.

However, a minority of the participants (DA1, CA) offered a different view. More specifically, CA responded that ‘I don’t know what the vision is’. He adds that

we did have a scheduled SLT meeting last year looking at documentation that would include that, but in one sense that is there on paper [emphasis]. If you want me to go and find the folder and download the paper, I can show you that, but it’s not something that resonates with us in terms of knowing where we’re going. (CA)

The headteacher acknowledges that some staff do not remember the vision.

It’s a matter of being in every document that the staff see. So, even if they say they have never seen it, we have it discussed when I first joined on 1<sup>st</sup> September. They have a share in the vision because they were all part of it when we made it up at the beginning of last year! (AA)

### *Observation findings*

There were two distinct findings from the observed senior leadership team meeting. Firstly, the headteacher communicated her vision of converting the

school into an academy. Secondly, the personalised curriculum is at the top of their strategic action plan, looking at personalized learning for each individual child.

### *Overview*

The data suggest that the SLT is central in setting the vision and that departmental SEFs encourage departments to share a strong sense of purpose. This dimension focuses on a collaborative strategic direction based on stakeholders' views. Promoting a positive teaching and learning environment, and creating mechanisms to enable pupils achieve to their highest level, are key features of the school's vision for learning.

### Curriculum management

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The main curriculum management theme emerging from the documentary analysis is personalization. In the operational target-setting plan (strategic plan, 2010), it is the headteacher's role, and one of the deputies who is responsible for the curriculum, to consult with departments in order to establish a set of distinct curriculum pathways that foster personalized learning. The SEF (p.17) also states that, within the departmental learning and teaching strategic plan, both CA and DA, with the support of other subject teachers, have created flexible curriculum pathways for pupils so that they could ensure every child reaches its potential based on their abilities and needs, by preparing and implementing new GCSE specifications, revising KS4 entry policy, and accelerated examination

entry. The minutes from one SLT meeting indicate the significant role of personalized learning in improving student achievement.

### *Findings from interviews*

Curriculum management is set within a hierarchical structure as the headteacher implies below:

Each head of department talks to a deputy or myself, and then we, as deputies and head, sit round and talk it through. That's planning. For example, in today's morning meeting with the deputies, we discussed which courses we feel we need to develop further, we looked at the number of students, we looked at the teaching staff we've got available and where we are headed.

In relation to the headteacher's role in curriculum management, DA, head of department responded that 'She delegates, but I have to account for all of my programmes with data'. CA agreed by saying 'I've got total freedom. I don't think that the head or anybody else would look to dictating, changing how we do things and when we do things.' However, BA admits that the headteacher is highly involved in this process as 'at the end of the day, it's *her* [emphasis] say as to whether we introduce a new GCSE Spanish or whatever, because none of these changes can happen without her authority'.

All participants agreed that the head of departments' role is crucial in the management of the curriculum within departments. All teacher participants also agreed that they have an input within their department's curriculum planning that fosters personalised learning, ensuring that students embark upon courses that meet their needs.

### *Observation findings*

At the SLT meeting attended by the researcher, a significant proportion of time was devoted to curriculum issues, such as GCSE subject choices and personalized learning. Developing a personalised curriculum through more GCSE options was a point raised by a deputy head and all SLT members agreed that what pupils are achieving may be a result of their subject options choices. As a consequence, they addressed the need to focus on GCSE option processes. At the line management observation, possible curriculum changes in the event of becoming an Academy, and the allocation of a certain amount of staff time to liaise with partner schools, were discussed.

### *Overview*

It is evident from the subject teachers' responses, the SLT's views and the internal documentation, that the headteacher oversees curriculum management, but there is also an element of shared leadership between the SLT, middle leaders and departmental teachers. The personalised nature of curriculum has been a significant factor in raising GCSE results as pointed out by some participants and stressed in the SEF.

### Evaluation of student results

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

According to the school's self evaluation form (p.23), calendared meetings between senior and middle managers cover pupil target setting, progress towards the achievement of these targets, exam analysis, and the implementation of

intervention strategies with the purpose to drive improvement higher. Along with BA's involvement in personalised learning activities evidenced in the SEF, BA and the curriculum deputy head have the responsibility to review revision and preparation strategies in all three core subjects in order to raise standards and reduce variations in results between departments. Student tracking through data, intervention, and acceleration, are strong features of the departments' SEF. The development of data use for monitoring and tracking of pupil progress, and the review of target settings, have been the main areas of action within the strategic development plan. Individual departments have systems to measure and monitor the progress of each pupil (SEF: 7). The Ofsted report (2010) also highlighted the contribution of student peer mentoring to the 'raising standards' strategy.

### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher (AA) has delegated leadership responsibilities to the school leadership team whose role is to monitor the work of various areas of the school with the purpose to drive improvement. The head, who leads a meeting with her deputies to analyse the examination results, explained how they evaluated performance:

So we went through each department where they've all written down what they have done well, whether the grades were up to scratch, whether they think they could improve, which teachers are performing best, comparison against pupil, pupil against pupil, set against set, teacher against teacher ... We know where we need to improve.

All the participants confirmed that the evaluation of the students' results is mostly through scrutinizing the examination results in departmental meetings,

and also this evaluation is the pathway for determining the target grades for each student within a personalized framework.

All the school leaders (AA, BA, CA, DA) pointed out that, each September and after January module results, the head of departments fill out a proforma to examine the results that students have achieved. Subsequently, HoDs have an interview with a member of the SLT where recommendations are provided either to maintain what they do or to improve it. As a result, the evaluation leads to the development of an improvement plan.

As shown later in this report, leaders also support teachers' learning about how to raise achievement, by influencing their teaching practices. Effective teaching practices, and appropriate mechanisms for flexible monitoring of student's progress, lead to positive impacts on student achievement.

Monitoring students' progress is an ongoing process within the school. All participants agreed that target setting is based on effective tracking and challenging targets are set grounded in accurate analysis of achievement to improve outcomes. CA highlights the individual student's tracking system which looks at the calculation of the value added so that all staff have a clear idea from early in Year 11 what the value added is for each individual child. Assistant heads of Year monitor subject achievement and set targets for pupils at Key Stage 3 and 4. The target grades are determined by a combination of the SIMS assessment manager looking at the individual involved, and the heads of departments, who then involve the staff as well, and the targets are reviewed in order to monitor whether the pupils are achieving the targets. Teachers, who are



recording their students' results and review targets, have agreed that the value-added scores that students get through the tracking keep them on track as teachers. CA1 mentions that 'we see whether students are on target through mentoring them. We set and give them targets for the week, let's say, a homework timetable path, to make sure that they are on target'.

The strongest monitoring features are the strategies undertaken in case of students' underperformance or in order to pull up expectations and standards across the year groups. The headteacher (AA) argues that 'we are keeping a very close monitoring eye on the child and each child feels that they are looked after and supported.' Developing support strategies for students was seen by all respondents as an effective driving force towards higher standards. This included: a change of teachers, a change of group, one-to-one tuition provided by the 6<sup>th</sup> Form students in terms of student peer mentoring, homework classes, and extra tuition revision sets during holidays (half terms). The headteacher, and the deputy head (BA), stressed the assertive mentoring scheme, a strategy for addressing students' underperformance, in which all students in Y10 and Y11, who are at risk of underachieving, or students across the group who are potentially not going to achieve as well as they should, are mentored by members of the SLT.

### *Observation findings*

Evaluation and monitoring student progress was not a significant feature of the observed SLT meeting, or of the other activities observed by the researcher.

## *Overview*

Developing high aspirations is a key area of action for leaders. Senior and middle leaders have indirect effects on student outcomes by establishing the conditions for strong instructional leadership practices via the establishment of individual target goals, monitoring teaching and learning, and creating a supportive environment for teachers to develop. However, subject teacher mentors also directly influence their students' tracking and intervention pathway.

## Monitoring teachers' performance

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The inspection judgement on the school's overall effectiveness is that students' progress is a result of good teaching and excellent monitoring by the SLT.

The Senior Leadership Team's monitoring of the work of departments, the quality of teaching, assessment and the effectiveness of the curriculum are systematic. Also, the monitoring of student progress, with systematic and thorough departmental reviews, is exemplary. These reviews are fully integrated with monitoring of students' progress to ensure that the leadership and management of teaching and learning are outstanding (Ofsted Inspection Report: 5).

In the departments' SEF, it is stated that teaching and learning are monitored through observations carried out by HoDs. The post-Ofsted action plan highlights the intention to developing a focus group of HoDs for consistency in lesson observations with the purpose of improving the quality of teaching and students' progress, supervised by BA and the SLT. The operational target setting plan indicates AA's encouragement for peer-lesson observations, focusing on best practice as a tool for school improvement.

Observations are linked to ‘performance management’ and specific department foci. Performance is also monitored through the line management structure in which line managers negotiate departmental targets with subject leaders for all learners (SEF: 23) The issues raised by the monitoring system are shared with subject leaders via review meetings with the headteacher and senior staff (SEF: 8).

### *Findings from interviews*

There was a general agreement among the SLT participants concerning the headteacher’s observations of subject teachers’ lessons.

We do a lot of monitoring in the classroom through *pop in*. I pop in and have a look at the class in progress. We also have book monitoring, checking marking is done... that’s our check by the teachers that they meet the targets, as well. (AA)

But, they question its frequency. The headteacher’s response is:

It varies. I have seen quite a lot this year because now I have been here a year and I am having chance to get out a little bit more. I would say this term I have probably seen 50% of the staff this half term, but in very short ‘pop ins’, probably quarter an hour, 20 minutes ‘pop ins’.

The subject teachers (CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4 and DA2) agreed that the headteacher has tried to watch lessons of every teacher and she had visited their department to make sure things work well in the teaching and learning process. However, DA4 commented that ‘when I first started I was observed and then it seems the head didn’t observe very much’. Informal systems also take place in the school. DA2 points out that ‘the headteacher is talking to students as well

and to the teaching assistants who probably know the teachers more than anybody’.

CA noted that discussions between the head and HoDs are infrequent. DA, the other head of department, contended that she discusses a teacher’s performance with the headteacher very carefully, but only after other avenues have been exhausted:

I see my role as middle manager to identify problems and deal with them before I go to the headteacher, it’s my job to deal; I would never escalate it with the headteacher, unless I had used *every* [emphasis] possible pathway to deal with it within the department; in the security of the department, never! I don’t want outside or hierarchical agencies getting involved.

A closely related strategy for monitoring teacher’s performance is through the performance management process where the line managers reflect reviewees’ professional aspirations every year. The strategy in dealing with underperformance varies according to the individual and the nature of underperformance.

Monitoring the work of the departments is part of the SLT’s role as each member line manages some departments. BA discusses his approach:

I meet with those heads of departments regularly and I talk about all the things that should be happening in that department, in-service training, the results of the kids they’re getting and so on, and I monitor it and intervene if I need to, but generally speaking this is the role of the heads of departments.

According to DA, the headteacher has ‘overseen that people line manage, she’s got the whole picture and she would rely on senior leaders to point out strategies, strengths and weaknesses’. Thus, BA exercises leadership through ensuring that

the head of departments exercise learning-centred leadership to improve their staff's professional capacity. HoDs' involvement in the analysis of teachers' performance is important, while, also, middle leaders monitor the teaching and learning process to sustain outstanding areas and develop group dynamics for improvement.

### *Observation findings*

Monitoring classroom instruction was not on the deputy head's schedule on the day of the shadowing. However, during the observation day, he responded to another senior leader through a formal communication about a scheduled lesson observation. At the SLT meeting, the issue of monitoring was discussed. In a line management meeting, BA, with a curriculum learning manager and an assistant head, highlighted the need to monitor two teachers' performance.

### *Overview*

Monitoring classroom instruction is the responsibility of the SLT, including the headteacher. BA's role is in ensuring quality via lesson observations and departmental quality assurance monitoring. The middle leaders' role seems to be more direct in producing changes in teachers' instructional behaviour within their departments, as they systematically monitor their teachers' performance. The line management process is important as a means of evaluating the department as a whole and monitoring teachers' appraisal in order to develop areas for improvement.

## Mentoring and coaching

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

According to the strategic vision (2010), one intention of the school is to provide increasing opportunities for dialogue and discussion between members of staff on a range of professional issues.

### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher stated that BA (deputy head) is primarily responsible for mentoring and coaching. 'Having said that, if I go to a lesson and I'm not happy, if there is a problem, then yes I do the coaching too.' However, when asked whether the headteacher is coaching, BA contended:

Not currently, I don't think. Not in the sense that you mean it. I'm sure she has discussions about performance with key personnel.

CA was also negative, and his perception is in line with the SLT's (AA, DA) view on BA's predominant role in mentoring as part of a facilitative professional development orientation.

No, no, I don't think the head is but I think BA is. [BA] has got the charisma, he's got the knowledge, he's got the gift to teach.

BA claims that 'I would do more of the mentoring of new staff than anybody else in the senior team.' As far as coaching is concerned, professional learning is created through formal and informal conversations about teaching and learning between the senior and middle leaders' visiting classrooms and teachers.

Sometimes I observe a lesson, then I give feedback on that lesson, if that member of staff needs more feedback about what I've said and why I've said that, and sometimes we have a dialogue about that, and mostly staff say '*Thanks for that, I haven't realized that, Oh that's very useful!*' Occasionally there might be somebody who disagrees with you. (BA)

A middle leader, CA, claims that he uses formal dialogue with teachers in his department to review practices for pupils' learning, especially within an under-achieving context.

All teachers agreed with BA and CA that the headteacher does not mentor them. The majority of subject teachers (CA1, CA2, CA3, DA1, DA2, DA4) state that it is the head of departments who mentors them, as 'the SLT are quite concerned about PGCE students, GTP and young qualified teachers.' (DA2) However, CA4 and DA3 do not think they are mentored. 'I haven't heard of anything. Unofficially, I suppose the head of my department' (DA3). The majority of respondents addressed that learning about teaching is increased by 'peer coaching', which occurs informally in the staff room, corridors, and during break times, but formal mentoring is not widely extended.

### *Observation findings*

In the line management process, one of the themes discussed was support for one teacher through coaching. BA stressed that 'some people think they don't need any support but we think they do in order to meet the new needs of the school'.

### *Overview*

Creating a positive environment among teachers is an incentive to sustain the school's excellent results, through providing discussion. The mentoring role focuses on the deputy head, BA, who is perceived as the senior pedagogical

leader of the school. The HoDs' role is also stressed within this instructional leadership practice. Professional dialogues seem to happen a lot within departments and teachers have the opportunity to share knowledge and experience about classroom practices.

### Modelling

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

Followed Ofsted suggestions (2010) of sharing the best practice that exists across the school in order to improve the quality of teaching and students' progress, the responsibility was assigned to BA and the SLT in order to establish a structure which allows all departments to begin learning from one another and ensure that lessons are consistently good and outstanding (Post-Ofsted action plan). The headteacher and the SLT aim to reduce KS4 variations in results between departments through setting up departmental partnership groupings (November 2010) and establishing opportunities for departments to work together and learn from one another (January 2010) in order to ensure consistency across all teaching groups (Strategic Plan).

In the strategic development plan, a key area of action is to develop a collaborative community in order to foster consistency of practice, as a tool leading to raising attainment, so that the quality of teaching and learning is supported. Sharing good practice between departments is an ongoing process in order to reduce variations in results. 'Preparedness to share our good practice!' (Maths Department SEF).



### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher pointed out that BA does model teaching practices and added that there are others who do the same in their teams. However, BA did not refer to modelling within a formalised way. BA adds that some people attend his lessons, primarily trainee teachers or very inexperienced teachers. He also said that, occasionally, he may have some colleagues say ‘you know I’m struggling with this’ and I might say ‘Do you want to come and watch me do it?’. For example, a member of staff, who is not struggling at all, asked him for support as this person wanted to focus on assertive discipline. BA recommended five teachers whom he thought this person should go to watch as they would be excellent teachers to model for somebody else.

It is BA’s role to encourage members of the teaching staff to model teaching practices so that it leads to sharing best practice which may have an indirect long-term impact on students’ learning via teacher’s professional improvement. As he said ‘the more we share the better we are going to be’. CA confirms that BA is very active and proactive in this area.

It’s all these skills that [BA] is really good at and I’m really keen to see develop, so he does that across the school.

Several respondents preferred to emphasise shared practice rather than focus specifically on modelling. This might be interpreted as ‘peer modelling’. Within CA’s department, he makes it clear that they share good teaching practices but they particularly do that with people who are struggling within a particular area, or newly qualified teachers who need exposure to experienced teachers. The

other SLT member, DA, comments that ‘it’s not just me that models. There are some fantastic teachers, far better than me at some things and they model for me.’

CA confirms that experience teachers may be modelling good teaching practices to their peers within the departments.

I’ve been to [BA], saying I’ve someone in the department who is a qualified teacher but there is an area of weakness, so what can we do? What’s the best strategy for looking at how we can improve that? In some cases we say, well, just put him with another experienced teacher who’s got a similar style. (CA)

There are different opinions about modelling among teachers across different departments. DA1 argues that there is little opportunity for modelling good practice through the HoDs or any member of the SLT. In contrast, CA4 states:

Yeah definitely! More and more headteachers now don’t teach and I think they need to have someone who is working closely with them, who is a very strong teacher and has got a lot of experience, like a deputy head who’s had a very successful teaching career.

However, modelling has been embraced by the teaching staff in a less formal way by sharing teaching practices. CA1, DA2, DA3 and DA4 all mention this practice lies in the heart of peer observations within a friendly-collegial environment, in which they can get a clearer idea of techniques that are effective in the process of teaching and those that are best avoided.

DA4 pointed out that ‘the headteacher set up partner departments so that we were supposed to go and watch one of their lessons and vice versa. It’s about sharing good practice, about seeing how other departments work. Sometimes different departments are good at different things, so we learn’. In contrast, CA said that ‘across the school it hasn’t really worked, but within the department it does’.

### *Observation findings*

Modelling was not evident in the deputy head's shadowing day. However, BA's approach to teachers and pupils, and his high visibility, provides teachers and middle leaders with incentives for learning good leadership practices. Modelling teaching practices is a theme that emerged during the line management process where the curriculum learning manager responded to one of BA's questions about how they deal with a particular teacher by saying 'showing this teacher what we do in the department!'

### *Overview*

Creating a shared framework for 'good teaching practices' is primarily the responsibility of BA, whereas the HoDs' involvement is limited. Contrary to internal documentation, teachers do not value SLT engagement in this activity and prefer peer observations within departments to reinforce their skills and foster consistency of practice.

### Continuing professional development

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

According to the SEF, 'CPD opportunities exist for all staff. Priority is given to the fulfillment of performance and support staff appraisal targets and to the preparation of new curricular strategies which will result in an improved learning experience.' (p.23) According to the Maths SEF (2010: 25), individuals appreciate the support to 'improve their performance'- as a result they have

become more confident and the department stronger. Individual staff have ‘grown’ and developed well into new situations and responsibilities. Paid and unpaid delegated roles are in place and they are reviewed annually (staff handbook).

### *Findings from interviews*

The majority of teacher participants embraced the CPD theme by saying that the school is very supportive. All the participants agreed that they are encouraged to attend Local Authority courses, and those not provided by the LA, as soon as CPD opportunities are evaluated by the CPD co-ordinator (BA) and the senior leadership team. However, DA3 disagrees, arguing that ‘there is a lack on that. Sometimes, young teachers are not inspired. This, combined with not having any money to go on a course, I think, it can have a stagnating effect.’ In contrast, CA1’s view sheds light on the school’s potential to develop aspiring leaders

without involving us in leadership in a formalised way. For example, I am shadowing the head of the year to get an insight of what the job is, so that when, hopefully, I undertake such a responsibility, I will know where to start. I also show the SLT my ambition.

According to the senior leaders of the school (AA, BA, CA, DA), BA plays a central role in deciding who will benefit from the CPD opportunities and his policy is driven by investing in teaching staff on programmes that are value for money with the purpose of raising standards of learning for both partners, teachers and students. BA’s approach to CPD is: ‘If they need it, we give it to them.’

In-house professional development was provided by the headteacher to ensure that staff development activities are closely linked to school goals, providing the

features of an outstanding lesson, so that the staff are aware of what she will look for in lessons observations.

### *Observation findings*

There were no elements of CPD throughout the three observations in this school.

### *Overview*

The documentary analysis, and the interviews, show that BA is the person responsible for providing CPD opportunities for the staff of the school, as an essential element in raising standards. The emergence of unofficial in-house professional development is evident through the teachers' progression towards leadership (CA1).

## Instructional leadership and school improvement

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The school's self-evaluation form states that 'the pursuit of excellence in all of the school's activities over a considerable period of time has led to solid improvement and built upon previous successes.' (p. 42) This is in line with Ofsted's (2010) judgement that the school has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection (2007), as the whole school is engaged in setting high and challenging targets.

### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher's role in the school improvement plan involves strategic planning and the creation of the mechanisms that will facilitate change to be

implemented. The deputy head (BA) emphasizes his role in controlling and coordinating staff development activities required for successful school improvement. He states that ‘overall my responsibility is to make sure that teaching is as effective as it can be. We don’t only want to sustain, but move forward.’

CA emphasized the range of strategies that departments should have in common, especially in case of students’ underperformance in order to sustain school improvement.

The headteacher (AA) and the deputy head (BA) agree about the way they approach school improvement and sustainability. The head mentions that:

What we are good at is that it’s not just about the outstanding but sustaining, making sure people continue to improve. When you’re looking at high-performing schools, it’s not just about they’re high-performing now, it’s what you’re doing now in order to continue, to sustain it, to grow on it and take the team with you. (AA)

BA emphasizes a positive teaching and learning environment as a pathway to improvement continuity. The strong culture of school improvement is driven by the SLT through setting the mechanisms for monitoring departmental progress within the framework of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of the curriculum.

### *Observation findings*

The SLT meeting, which was primarily focused on converting the school to an academy, showed that senior staff believe that having control of their budget, and increased freedom from LA constraints, will reduce bureaucracy and allow them to really focus on teaching and learning.

### *Overview*

The relationship between instructional leadership and school improvement lies in how leaders make a difference within a high-performing secondary school. The emphasis has been on the practices that the headteacher and the leadership team adopt in order to influence the quality of learning within and outside classrooms. The SLT consistently communicates high expectations to all staff.

### The principal's instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The Ofsted inspection report notes that 'the strength of the leadership provided by the headteacher, supported by the school's senior leadership team and governors, is a key element in the school's improvement and its outstanding features. She has a clear vision for the school with a passionate belief in inclusion.' (p.8) Data from internal school documents show that the headteacher's role is strategically oriented as she is very much involved in setting up the framework for school development.

#### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher claims that 'everyday she is involved in LfL activities one way or another. There are lots of day-to-day management issues, but I would say most days probably 75 to 80% of the day.' DA adds that 'AA's role is not just on the practical level, it's a strategic level in which things have to be resolved. I think her strategic role is very powerful and she communicates the strategy down'. However, CA comments that:

She is very much working on her own and at times she is informed of what is going on rather than being part of the process of what is going on. She seems to be involved mostly with administrative tasks within the school. She is fairly office based, really.

This statement reinforces previous comments that the headteacher is not very visible.

The majority of teacher respondents said that the headteacher is not directly involved in LfL and they don't have a clear picture of her role. DA3, for example, said that 'during the working day I never see the head, so I can imagine that she is involved with administrative tasks, but BA, also the deputy for the curriculum and HoDs, is more involved'. In contrast, DA2 said that 'she is involved in the LfL activities and I'll give you an example. I know some teachers resent it but she walks around the school and come in to classrooms and watches us teach. She is visible.'

### *Observation findings*

The researcher was not able to observe the principal.

### *Overview*

The principal provides a strategic instructional leadership dimension, setting the framework for school improvement, seeking opportunities for systematic development and progress and providing a direction for raising standards, based on the strategic vision of a learning-centred school. Despite her claim that the highest proportion of her time is devoted to LfL activities, the head seems to be a strategic culture builder of the school who leaves more space to the deputy head



(BA) to coordinate and supervise the instructional leadership activities being implemented by middle leaders.

### Senior leaders' instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The statement in the SEF that 'a distributive leadership style within a highly focused, experienced leadership team' highlights that the headteacher has allocated leadership roles to other members of the SLT who are collectively and individually responsible for key areas of school management and 'together play an effective part in embedding ambition and driving improvement' (SEF: 22-23).

The deputy head (BA) has a significant role in managing teaching and learning. His instructional leadership activities include: developing the quality of the teaching staff, curriculum planning to strengthen the vision, monitoring the school system, and target setting with the purpose of monitoring student's progress. All those are identified to be his main target areas to improve the quality of teaching and learning (school strategic plan, 2010).

#### *Findings from interviews*

According to the participants, BA's exceptional role lies in determining the learning-centred vision in collaboration with the principal, monitoring of student results, monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum reviewing, mentoring, and modeling, as well as in his direct involvement in coordinating activities to boost performance. His role is highlighted by the headteacher and

the senior leaders, especially within the framework of managing staff needs to improve their practices within the classroom, giving the opportunity to teachers who are interested in learning from more experienced teachers, or even developing their presentation and communication skills for the improvement of their own classroom teaching.

The majority of the participants agreed that BA provides incentives for teachers' learning via modeling, monitoring and encouraging external CPD opportunities. CA4's comment summarises the views of the other participants: 'BA is highly involved in teaching and learning, but I think all the senior managers have a certain amount of input'.

### *Observation findings*

During the deputy head's shadowing, he was visible to the staff and students. BA showed that his role is to contribute to school effectiveness by ensuring that the mechanisms which drive improvement work efficiently within the departments that he line manages. He focuses on improving the quality of teaching and learning within and across departments.

### *Overview*

The deputy head has a prominent role in leading learning. He is the main instructional leader of this school, influencing the conditions that impact on the quality of instruction within the classroom, focusing on the development of a school culture of high expectations, and influencing the quality of school outcomes through aligning teaching and learning activities to achieve the desired

learning goals. BA works interactively with teachers and middle leaders in a shared instructional leadership capacity.

### Middle leaders' instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The main internal documents of the school, such as the SEFs and the school development plan, highlight the significant role of middle leaders in the development of measurable departmental targets which are in line with the school's goals. The crucial role of middle leaders was also acknowledged in the Ofsted inspection report.

#### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher (AA) highlights that there is shared leadership where 'everybody has a part to play'. Both AA and BA claim that heads of departments have a leading role in curriculum review and student's target setting and intervention. BA also stresses the critical role of middle leaders in driving improvement in terms of the different ways of turning Ds into Cs or more frequently monitoring the quality of teaching. BA said that 'as a line manager, I meet those heads of departments regularly and talk about all the things that should be happening in their department, but generally speaking, this is the role of the HoDs towards success.'

The teacher interviews show that the heads of the Maths and English departments, CA and DA, share good teaching practices within their departments,

and they encourage teachers go to each other's classes and observe each other's lessons in terms of sharing techniques and teaching strategies, mostly within an informal framework.

In a senior level, we don't have the opportunity to watch other people. What we do have is INSET courses that you see videos of people teaching which is OK but it's unrealistic. Anyway, in the department, I have had the privilege of sitting in a number of our HoD's lessons. There is also the encouragement to do peer observations. (DA4)

All teacher participants agreed that the head of departments' role is crucial in the management of the curriculum within their departments. Monitoring classroom teaching is a departmental role as the head of departments can observe the whole process of learning, from the structure of the lesson to the learning outcomes. Conversations about learning take place both formally and informally with the head of departments, who provide feedback and positive reinforcement.

### *Observation findings*

During the SLT observation, CA played an active role in the discussion about pupils' underachievement, departmental data assessment, GCSE subject options and personalized learning.

### *Overview*

The findings show that middle leaders have a prominent role in instructional leadership through developing and sustaining a staff culture that enables them to work productively, influencing students' achievement.

## **Overview of Case Study A**

The findings from school A suggest that, although the roles of the leadership team seem to be clearly defined, most teaching staff are unaware of the headteacher's responsibilities, apart from her strategic and administrative role. Leadership appears to be a distributed activity, within the SLT and the departments. The instructional role of the leadership team is seen as crucial. The headteacher and the SLT are involved in instructional activities in order to ensure that the whole staff are supported 'to go the extra mile', by strengthening the relationship between teaching and learning.

However, the headteacher of the school is less involved in this 'tactic for influencing classroom practice' (Southworth, 2004b) than other leaders are. The deputy head (BA) has a prominent role in managing teaching and learning through monitoring and mentoring, and his direct involvement demonstrates his learning orientation. BA's role is also highlighted within the modelling dimension although the main emphasis was given to peer modelling within a departmental framework. The members of the SLT that line manage departments of the school play an important role in improving staff and departmental development, and the deputy head (BA) plays a central role in providing CPD opportunities.

The most influential departmental instructional leadership practices are monitoring classroom teaching and student progress and motivating instructional practices sharing. The HoDs' role is crucial in the departmental management of curriculum, whereas the headteacher has a direct involvement in reviewing and

expanding the curriculum in consultation with the SLT. The headteacher provides a strong lead on the vision for learning which is then adapted by the HoDs with the purpose of determining departmental aims in accordance with the school's development plan.

Leadership in this high-performing school is focused on the core activities of teaching and learning. The senior and middle leaders' focus on the development of students' academic potential, and the creation of the mechanisms to enable them achieve to their highest level, is a distinctive feature of this school. The headteacher's role seems to be mainly strategic. Her direct involvement in the everyday LfL is considered to be unrealistic within this large school. Creating a shared learning-centred orientation of leadership, driven by the SLT, impacts on the quality of teaching and learning, in which influence on student learning is mediated via subject teachers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CASE STUDY REPORT**

### **SCHOOL B**

#### **Introduction**

School B is a large comprehensive school in the west midlands with 1500 students and 117 teachers. It received an 'outstanding' grade overall in the most recent Ofsted Inspection Report (2008) and outstanding 2010 GCSE examination results. It is a National Support School with an Executive Headteacher who is a Leader of Education, supporting two other schools apart from her own school. The associate head (AB) manages and leads the day-to-day work of the school as the operational headteacher (SEF: 2).

#### **Methodological Considerations**

Following the pattern discussed in chapter three, the researcher collected the following data:

➤ Documents: secondary school self-evaluation form (2010), the strategic school improvement plan (2009-2012), City council annual school improvement report, faculty action plan, faculty improvement plan- review, faculty intervention plan, overcoming barriers to learning document, headteacher's report for governing body meetings, the report to governors of the learning and teaching group, learning and teaching group information material, minutes of the leadership surgery in communications (English) and mathematics, Year 9 and Year 10 term and annual reports, parents' information booklet, assessment recording and reporting policy.

- Semi-structured interviews with the associate headteacher (AB), the senior deputy head (BB), an assistant head (EB) responsible for teaching and learning, the English and languages faculty leader (DB) and the Maths Line Manager (CB) who is a member of the SLT<sup>30</sup>. The Executive head was not included in this research due to her commitments to two other schools.
- Semi-structured interviews with four Mathematics teachers (CB1, CB2, CB3, CB4) and four English teachers (DB1, DB2, DB3, DB4).
- Shadowing the associate head (AB) for a day.
- Observation of a Leadership Team meeting (November 2010).
- Observation of a secondary leadership development day focused on ‘The leadership of inclusion’.

## Findings

### Vision for Learning

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The school’s vision of ‘success through excellence’ is set out in several documents, including the strategic school improvement plan. The drive towards continuity of ‘outstanding’ learning and teaching reflects the learning and teaching (L&T) vision in faculty SEFs. OFSTED (2008: 7) notes that ‘the headteacher’s clear vision for how the school should improve is reflected in the work and efforts of all staff.

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<sup>30</sup> The Maths Faculty Leader has been excluded by the study as she has been recently (September 2010) appointed in school B.



### *Findings from interviews*

The interviews with leaders and subject teachers showed that all were aware of the school's vision for outstanding learning. The leadership team links high expectations of learning to the priorities that are set for every half term with the purpose of creating outstanding learning environments, while the majority of teachers (DB1, DB2, DB3, DB4, CB3) also highlighted the collective decision-making within their faculty. The Senior Deputy Head (BB) expands AB's view by saying that

we want to ensure our students become resilient and independent learners; they understand what the barriers are for their learning, and therefore, they start to develop strategies to overcome those. So, they become more engaged in the partnership of learning, with the departmental teachers' contribution to vision.

CB, another senior leader, claimed that 'the vision for learning is to ensure that there is a variety of activities that are taking place that hits all learning needs of all students.' DB2 argues that 'the nature of the vision isn't debatable but how we achieve it is debated.' Whilst the Learning and Teaching leader (EB) identifies the importance of the improvement of pedagogical and professional practice in order to achieve outstanding learning, most respondents have also agreed that leadership learning is part of the school's vision. DB says 'teachers know what the vision is and they live and breathe it'.

### *Observation findings*

The Leadership Team meeting observed by the researcher focused on personalised learning strategies, Y9 and Y10 vulnerable students' additional support, and the goal to achieve 80% 5A\*-C including English and Maths. At the

secondary leadership development day, learning walks - the short class visits by the Leadership for Inclusion team and visiting senior leaders from other schools - enhanced the value of developing an outstanding school through regular and scheduled monitoring of teaching and learning. There were two significant features of the head's shadowing observation: i) ensuring an effective student learning environment; and ii) fostering teachers' leadership potential.

### *Overview*

The data show that the senior leadership team gives a strong lead on vision development towards outstanding learning and teaching as well as strengthening teachers' engagement in leadership. What also emanates from the data is middle leaders and subject teachers' involvement in the departmental decision-making process.

### Curriculum management

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

According to the staff handbook, curriculum is the executive headteacher's responsibility, along with the curriculum planning assistant head and one deputy headteacher. The management of teaching and learning is the responsibility of the strategy groups (comprising senior and middle leaders) who disseminate to faculties their particular foci on learning and teaching (SEF: 19), while reviewing the curriculum is the SLT'S responsibility (Overcoming Barriers to Learning document).

Ofsted (2008: 4) states that ‘personalising the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students [...] is a real strength in this school’. In particular, the ‘Overcoming barriers to learning’ document highlights the personalized pathways that support students who are having difficulties accessing the curriculum. Another theme arisen is the independent and collaborative learning through the building learning power (BLP) sessions (SEF: 4).

### *Findings from interviews*

EB emphasized the leadership team’s involvement and monitoring of curriculum effectiveness. The head of faculty and key stage coordinators are responsible for developing and reviewing the curriculum (CB1, CB2, CB4, DB1, DB3). Leaders stressed the value of teachers’ opportunity to make suggestions about what options should be offered in different year groups. However, in the overall management of the curriculum, teachers believe they do not play any role whereas they can influence their own subject. CB2 says ‘I’m given what I’ve got to deliver and then I decide how I deliver it.’ In contrast, CB3, DB1, DB2, CB1 and CB4 responded positively on teachers’ involvement in the curriculum development.

An important theme emerging through interviews is personalizing students’ learning, ‘building the curriculum around students rather than try to fit them where we think they should go’ (CB). DB2 reinforces this view:

We have a lot of students here who might go to College one day a week because they might need to do something vocational, and [AB] will organize that. She has a lot of work to do with vulnerable students, basically with the school’s learning inclusion centre. Students are able to work in small groups in a safe and quite environment rather than in a classroom of 25-30 students.

### *Observation findings*

At the Leadership Team meeting, areas for consideration were the range of subject options offered, the personalization of student timetables, alterations to the overall traditional curriculum in Year 7 to Year 9, policy for exam entry and the delivery of the core subjects. The leadership team also discussed the feedback from faculty learning walks on 'marking for improvement and questioning'. A striking example of the personalized curriculum was seen during AB's shadowing day, when she proposed that a child should attend business lessons, receive additional support and also do a work placement once a week.

### *Overview*

The leadership team has a prominent role in curriculum framing and development as well as their collective responsibility (leadership team and the faculties) in curriculum monitoring, evaluation and reviewing is evident. Teacher participants have also an input within their department's curriculum planning.

### Evaluation of student results

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The SEF (p.14) shows that data are used to identify students in need of intervention. Ofsted (2008: 5) adds that excellent academic support and guidance are increasingly supporting pupils in achieving well and reaching challenging targets. Regular moderation and monitoring procedures ensure that tutors and

mentors have an overview of the performance and progress of their students to ensure that the school targets are realized (city council report: 2). The measurement of the attitude to learning (ATL) effort and the use of the data RAGG system (RED, AMBER, GREEN, GOLD) enable tutors to oversee students' progress towards their targets and intervene when necessary (e.g. faculty action plan).

### *Findings from interviews*

Triangulating students' work with classroom observation, examination and test results is a way to assess learning (AB). BB stresses the value of the statistical tools that they get nationally with the purpose of producing a set of data for each subject area for all different cohorts of students against national benchmarks, against schools with similar quality and similar background, in order to analyse their own students' performance. All four senior leaders (AB, BB, CB, DB) agreed with all subject teachers' argument about the strong and consistent monitoring system of the year groups across every subject for every child, where teachers set the RAGG towards student targets. The SLT monitors and actions are immediately in place.' (CB4). The maths line manager (CB) confirmed that the SLT are looking at individual performance:

We go through lists of names rather than numbers. We go through the whole process for 240 students. We aggregate those results up, on how that impacts results-wise for the school, and where we need to put some intervention. 'Is it to do with the extra that we need? Do we need to look at the curriculum? Or, do we need to make an input in terms of the learning and teaching they are receiving?'

EB points out that 'we line manage a faculty in terms of tracking student's progress and planning intervention processes.' DB3, DB2 and DB1 agree that, in

a data rich school, the headteacher also evaluates students' progress and in case of underachievement, she directs her attention to improve achievement of the intervention groups.

CB1's view that underperforming students are offered intervention classes after school is shared by all participants. All subject teachers stressed the role of 6<sup>th</sup> Form student and teacher academic mentors in working with underachieving students and the significance of after school additional sessions. CB also illustrates leaders' voice in offering curriculum options, while teachers agreed that vulnerable students' timetables are more personalized because they gain more one-to-one support in the school's Learning Inclusion Centre. DB1 also stresses the involvement of parents in learning process. 'Before the English and Maths exams, we have a revision session for parents, so the parents know what help their children will need for the exams'.

### *Observation findings*

Evaluating and monitoring students' progress was a significant feature of the observed Leadership Team meeting, the secondary leadership development day and the associate headteacher's (AB) shadowing.

### *Overview*

The strongest features of evaluation are the strategies undertaken to raise expectations and standards through the aspiration targets across the year groups. The headteacher (AB) has delegated leadership responsibilities to the teachers with the purpose to drive improvement. Different teachers and leaders contribute

to the personalised intervention strategies undertaken, with the purpose of creating an outstanding learning environment.

### Monitoring teachers' performance

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

According to the faculty improvement plan review, monitoring is undertaken through lesson observations and moderation of Years 10 & 11. 'Pop into' lessons, scheduled Learning Walks, and formal observation of staff through performance management, are two other ways to monitor the quality of teaching and learning (staff handbook). Line managers, faculty and subject leaders conduct regular developmental observations to assess the quality of student learning, and are, therefore, able to make judgements on the quality of the provision within their faculties (SEF: 4).

#### *Findings from interviews*

Responding to her own question *How do you know how to support someone if you are not monitoring them?*, BB stressed the importance of the leadership team monitoring teacher's performance in order to provide support driving to improvement, through judgemental and developmental procedures. AB states 'I walk the Walk all through every faculty, so I personally know what's going on.' There is a general agreement about this theme among all the respondents, suggesting that there are many different ways to pick up evidence about teacher's performance via classroom observations, marking books, quality assurance, student outcomes and parental concern.

AB's response that she monitors teacher's performance, based on the results of the judgemental observation, is in accordance with the majority of teachers' (CB1, CB2, CB3, CB4) view that the performance management system guides AB to create a picture of teachers' jobs. However, the learning and teaching leader (EB) comments that 'AB does not monitor every teacher's performance, because we have 150 teachers, but AB goes regularly on learning walks, so she goes to classrooms'. CB stressed that:

the headteacher delegates responsibilities to the appropriate people. Through the leadership team, we've lesson observations standardized, so that judgements on quality of teaching won't be different to the same observation anybody else is having. And the head would be involved in identifying the support that is going to be in place for the members of staff who need support.

There is a dialogue between the senior leadership team and the faculty leaders in order to monitor the faculty's performance through line management. CB1, CB2, DB1 and DB2 explained that, in the event of a department's underperformance, the head would identify the under-performance strategy within a faculty along with the deputies and the assistant heads. 'It's a very no blame culture, but we have to sort it out' (DB1).

Since 2009, the learning walk, done by the SLT, has been used to get a holistic view of what is happening in the faculty regarding some pre-set issues, such as effective questioning, and marking for improvement, according to all participants views. DB, head of a faculty, uses learning walks as a way to remind people what they need to do for self-improvement within a developmental observation framework, while her example of using the feedback from the learning walks in a faculty meeting led to all teachers learn from the 'Even better Ifs' framework. However, CB3 believes that



it's a snapshot and I don't think we should put too much on an individual teacher's performance. But if you put all the snapshots together then you get a view of where the faculty is. And I think that's the purpose of it.

AB responded on the case of teacher's under-performance with the word 'challenge'. The learning and teaching leader (EB) commented on the strategy that the school employs for teacher underperformance:

I observe weekly to help that member of staff improve. If it wasn't as bad as competency, but just below satisfactory, then again there is surround support. The learning and teaching group, and the faculty leaders, who all know what good learning looks like, may check that teachers use feedback effectively.

Teachers' performance and departments' underperformance is discussed through performance management between the associate head (AB), a deputy Head (BB) and the leader of Learning & Teaching (EB), and then an underperformance strategy is identified. All participants agreed with the senior leaders that if a performance management indicator was not met, supportive procedures, such as thematic conversations, coaching, would be put in place. DB2 says 'for example, with a teacher who was struggling I've been asked to be their support, be friendly, maybe go and support in the classroom.' AB noted that

if people feel it's within a coaching environment and there is support and high level of CPD and time is given in order to address the *Even Better Ifs*, then you have staff quite prepared to go with you. So, we have high standards, high expectations but high levels of support in CPD.

### *Observation findings*

On the day of the shadowing, AB observed one of the assistant heads who was leading a leadership module at the school. Also, short 'pop ins' into classrooms and the Learning Inclusion Centre were evident. The researcher had the opportunity to be part of the learning walk experience on the secondary

leadership development day, in which the visiting leaders of other schools visited a range of classes to explore the 'inclusive classroom', while a reflection session on the good practices and the areas for improvement followed followed.

### *Overview*

The leadership team (including HoDs) monitors the work of the faculties through line management and informal lesson observations, and the headteacher has an overview of staff performance through the performance management system. Monitoring classroom instruction within a developmental observation framework has been highlighted by the learning and teaching group who are coaching teachers in order to improve the quality of their teaching. The learning walk is another mechanism developed by school B with the purpose of monitoring teaching, within a developmental framework provided by the SLT.

### Mentoring and coaching

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The report to governors of the learning and teaching group highlighted the power of coaching to improve teaching practice, while the faculty action plan stressed coaching as an effective model towards 'outstanding' teaching to improve student learning. The strategic school improvement plan shed light on coaching for leadership, in order to develop the next generation of school leaders, while an emphasis was given to modeling the dialogue and approaches that create a culture of high-quality learning-centred leadership. Consequently, all senior leaders coach for outstanding leadership and support aspiring leaders with

change projects to further support school improvement (SEF: 18). The learning and teaching group has, also, made a significant impact in 2010, with more outstanding teachers having been developed to deliver outstanding lessons, knowing what to look for in outstanding learning and to coach for outstanding learning (SEF: 4).

### *Findings from interviews*

The interviews revealed that every teacher has got two coaches, one for leadership and one for learning, with the purpose of improving their performance. Coaching is also a delegated responsibility among the staff, as CB and DD mentioned, while, at the same time, it is a hierarchical procedure in which senior leadership team members are coaching assistant heads, assistant heads coaching faculty leaders, faculty leaders coaching second in faculty, going all the way down. More specifically, the learning and teaching leader (EB) said that ‘AB has coaching for leadership people; she is my line manager and she was my leadership pathways coach last year, so that really improved my performance.’

All teachers agreed that peer-coaching, especially through the learning and teaching group, is a means of sharing ideas and best practices with the purpose of developing classroom practice. CB4 stresses the benefits of coaching for learning:

Because you don't have time to go and see anyone else teaching, the only way you can get what they do in their classroom is through discussion. In the Coaching for Learning session that we've got tomorrow, it's about Marking for Improvement. Both teachers have to bring pieces of work we've marked ... and then, you give yourself a target and you have to say how you are going to monitor and judge those targets which normally would be through a review with an

additional piece of work next time you meet, because that's a sharing practice.

CB4 and DB highlight the strategic focus on coaching for leadership meetings. DB describes the coaching issues that they discuss with her colleague. 'It's more strategies that we discuss than content. I wouldn't discuss with her how I'm going to set up my new GCSE. But I can discuss the different interventions, different style of leadership and how they work with different people. I think it's supposed to be the bigger picture issues you might have in your faculty.' DB2 gave as an example the Aspiring Leaders programme in which 'you are allocated to a person in a higher level than you, they can help you to aspire, to do different things and help you with a change project, whether it's a Master's or a TLA project, something you can look at and reflect on, in terms of practice'.

### *Observation findings*

During AB's shadowing day, peer-leader coaching provided by AB for a deputy head has been observed, discussed about a department's line management meetings. They also had a professional dialogue about learning and teaching initiatives and control assessment for Y11.

### *Overview*

Coaching for leadership and coaching for learning schemes, which are handled hierarchically, are the mechanisms for providing support to every subject teacher in the school in order to improve their performance. However, the learning and teaching group also facilitates teacher's learning and practice through professional discussions within the faculties. The Aspiring Leaders programme is designed to enhance aspiring teachers' skills through a coaching pair procedure.

The fact that ‘mentoring’ has been only used (interchangeably with ‘coaching’) by a few respondents, may confirm EB’s point that ‘We don’t mentor, here, apart from NQTs when they need surround support.’ Within this instructional leadership practice, sharing knowledge and experience are being implemented by both senior and middle leaders, as well as subject teachers.

## Modelling

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The staff handbook (2010-2011: 32) highlights the Advanced Skills Teachers role as facilitators of raising learning and teaching standards, while an emphasis is given on modelling teaching approaches to showcase schemes of learning. The minutes of the leadership surgery document within the communications faculty show that DB (head of faculty) thinks she has impacted as a leader by encouraging faculty members going to each other’s lessons to support other staff and to share good practice. Scrutinising the leadership surgery document for maths faculty, a potential focus on an external modelling of the faculties’ good practice is evident.

### *Findings from interviews*

CB and DB agreed that the headteacher does not model teaching practices because she does not teach. However, EB explained that she and AB modeled good practice at the building learning power (BLP) day. DB agreed with AB’s point that:

the leadership team encourages middle leaders to be good or outstanding and we would expect them to model teaching in order to ensure the best quality. They are also expected to be very visible leaders. (AB)

Another theme that emerged is the school's contribution to schools in challenging circumstances, as being a National Support School. 'We are expected to model our good teaching practices in order to develop colleagues in the other schools. What we do is modelling instructional practices for the school's improvement.' (BB) Good practice in terms of vulnerable students is demonstrated to teachers within the city. 'There is a lot of modelling good practice through the city that we do, we lead. Trainee teachers also come to see good teaching by the Advanced Skill Teachers'. (EB)

Peer-modelling within departments has been another theme highlighted. AB points out that the expectation is that each member of staff shares their experience of learning and teaching. DB says

we do try modeling for each other. As a faculty, when we have meetings we always have learning and teaching on the agenda and talk about some good practice whenever possible. Also, if you go to our hub in our lunch time, you hear people talking about teaching and learning and that's just lovely.

EB and teachers (CB3, CB4, DB1, DB4) link modeling to viewing each others' lessons and stress the value of seeing different manners and styles that different teachers use through viewing their colleagues teach. All subject teachers mentioned that modelling doesn't happen a lot, because of limited time. In addition to the INSET training sessions that modelling sessions took place, DB1 highlights the 'Carousel' sessions that are going on throughout the year:

Each teacher chooses to attend three sessions to three different classrooms to see different strategies through modelling. One of the sessions I attended recently was on Effective Questioning.

Similarly, EB reveals that ‘teachers share strategies that have worked within their faculties, while the learning and teaching group’s role is, basically, disseminating their best quality teaching practices based on Ofsted criteria.’ CB1, DB3 and DB4 also highlighted the importance of modelling sessions by Advanced Skills Teachers about what an outstanding lesson is.

### *Observation findings*

The researcher had the opportunity to watch AB’s model teaching to another leader who will be running the new module ‘passport to leadership’, which is targeted at secondary students (Y9). AB’s interactive way of teaching attracted students to learn about different leadership styles.

### *Overview*

Modelling teaching practices is undertaken through the learning and teaching group and the Advanced Skills Teachers. Modelling within this school is mainly translated into sharing practices, while also, the BLP (Building Learning Power) lessons at INSET was an effective way to identify good teaching practice and teaching styles. As a NSS, the provision of modelling practices has been extended to other schools.

## Continuing professional development

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

Staff development is a major element of this school's philosophy. 'We are committed to being a centre of excellence for the training; we are committed to fostering the next generation of teachers, as they bring innovation, enthusiasm and up-to-date subject knowledge, impacting positively on the quality of our teaching' (SEF: 14). The review and evaluation of all teaching staff training policies is the overall responsibility of the assistant headteacher (EB) and the leadership team who support staff's career development (staff handbook).

Training is provided through three essential routes: national venues, at LA level and school based (staff handbook: 44). According to a faculty improvement plan review, one member of the faculty is attending the aspiring leaders course and two members are completing Masters' courses. In-house teacher days provide CPD opportunities that reflect the priorities set within the school improvement plan and current educational agendas. Their main purposes are to enhance knowledge, share good practices and develop staff expertise.

The minutes of the learning and teaching meetings and the staff handbook (p. 47) revealed that the learning and teaching group contributes to teacher's professional development within the school, 'through delivering the whole school learning and teaching workshops, and the training sessions for all staff twice every half term.' (Report to governors).



### *Findings from interviews*

AB and EB highlight the high quality training development and CPD opportunities that run within the school, and the in-school courses such as coaching for leadership, coaching for learning, learning and teaching workshops, as ‘we do have the expertise here’ (EB). The associate head (AB) encourages middle and senior leaders to develop as leaders by giving them opportunities, as EB and BB support. EB stated that the headteacher encourages her development. ‘I did leadership pathways last year and she was my coach, now we’re looking at me being an Ofsted inspector.’

There is general agreement about the provision of CPD opportunities based on how teachers’ needs fit to their own vision, the school’s improvement plan and national requirements. The importance of continuing professional development lies in the fact that there is a big focus on leadership within school B, as DB1, DB2, DB3, CB1 and CB4 all stress in their interviews.

### *Observation findings*

The observations shed light on CPD and leadership development in this leadership specialist school. In the peer-coaching meeting, AB had a discussion with one of the deputies about expanding one of the teacher’s roles within humanities. Middle leaders from neighbouring schools had the opportunity to attend workshops within the framework of leadership professional development, at the leadership of inclusion development day. Also, at the leadership team meeting, the headteacher (AB) stressed the significance of offering an active engagement in learning and teaching to experienced middle leaders who aspire to

develop senior leadership skills, within the trainee assistant headteacher internship in a leadership specialist school.

### *Overview*

In-house professional development has been highly developed in school B, providing the features of outstanding lessons, expanding leadership opportunities and pedagogical improvement, whereas CPD outside the school mainly lies in postgraduate programmes. The findings show that the associate head (AB) and the senior deputy head (BB) are responsible for leadership development while staff development is the responsibility of EB, the learning and teaching leader.

### Instructional leadership and school improvement

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The school's strategic improvement plan, the learning and teaching policy statement in the staff handbook and the SEF all show that the school has established innovative strategies and groups to maintain the pace of improvement (SEF, City council annual school improvement report), mainly through a systematic monitoring of school performance and promoting the professional development of the staff. As the Ofsted Report (2008: 5) shows, sharply focused plans to initiate changes, a clear vision about improving teaching and learning, and the development of personalized learning, are all the means of ensuring continuing improvement within school B.

Scrutinizing school internal documents, the SEF (2010) states that learning-centred leadership is at the heart of all their work. 'All leaders focus on the rigorous monitoring of standards and achievement, modeling good practice and encouraging dialogue about learning.' (ibid: 19) The contribution of the learning and teaching group to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning mainly by coaching towards 'outstanding' teaching and learning, has been highlighted in the SEF (p.20).

### *Findings from interviews*

The associate headteacher (AB) says that her role is to make sure that people feel supported in order to improve themselves. She said 'I see myself as a conductor of an orchestra. You know where you want to be and we have a team here who have a 'can do attitude' and they really want to promote different aspects of school improvement'. The senior deputy head (BB) comments on how the school was transformed from 'satisfactory' to 'outstanding'.

Obviously, key to that was to eradicate any low satisfactory practice which is a mix of supporting colleagues to become better. There was a lot of passive learning, teaching not for learning, but teaching for survival.

The head of faculty (DB) believes that her role in the school's improvement is linked to raising students results. 'To get 80% A\*-C is my main role in life. This target is everything.' The head of faculty's instructional role is linked to the school's improvement via the faculty's improvement pathway. In relation, CB's role in school improvement is related to the areas that he oversees. Data and monitoring student progress helps them ensure that everybody is on track. CB

emphasized the importance of ensuring that the key success criteria identified in the faculty improvement plan flow into the performance management of each member of staff.

BB's and EB's responses suggest that the headteachers play an important role in the school improvement plan. BB states that 'the executive head changed the culture of the school and she made what was happening in the school a collective responsibility open to the leadership team. It was a collective leadership strategy to work on the key aspects of improvement for the whole school.' EB says that AB writes the school improvement plan. CB highlights the collective nature of school improvement, by saying 'we distribute quality assurance through distributing leadership. We actually identify where we need to get better and we do.'

### *Observation findings*

The activities that took place during the researcher's observations, such as the curriculum review, and the evaluation of students' results with an emphasis on the intervention strategies discussed by the leadership team, the monitoring of teachers' performance via learning walks, and the coaching for leadership discussion that AB had with a deputy head, all highlight the SLT's role in the school's improvement procedure.

### *Overview*

All the previous themes in this report highlight the presence of instructional leadership practices within school B. There is a strong link between monitoring

students' progress and coaching for learning with a drive for improvement. Sharing leadership at the senior and middle levels, and delegating informal roles to subject teachers (e.g. coaching for learning), help to improve the quality of learning and teaching.

### The principal's instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The SEF and the staff handbook show that the executive headteacher's role is strategically oriented, focusing on leading continuous school achievement, strategic support for NSS schools, curriculum and staffing and governors' personnel and finance. The associate head's (AB) strategic role involves school self-evaluation and the school improvement plan, maintaining outstanding practice and leadership development. Ofsted's judgement (2008: 7) that 'the headteacher's clear vision for how the school should improve' reinforces the quality assurance that the leadership team is trying to achieve. The staff handbook states that curriculum is the executive headteacher's responsibility along with an assistant head and a deputy headteacher. However, AB's instructional leadership activities include the use of data analysis in order to set challenging targets; undertaking developmental and judgemental observations to assess the quality of student learning and monitoring the faculty's work and coaching for outstanding leadership (SEF: 18). Professional development needs are identified by the leadership team, including the headteacher, who helps fulfil training needs (staff handbook: 44).

### *Findings from interviews*

The associate headteacher (AB) claims that she devotes 90% of her time to LfL activities. BB pointed out that AB prioritizes this kind of activities all the time.

Learning and teaching is on the agenda of every faculty and leadership meeting which we see. What AB will also do, if a child is becoming difficult, she would look at that timetable and say what is the quality of Learning and Teaching, would it help to personalize its timetable, move this student into another group?

Highlighting the different nature of both headteachers' roles within National Support Schools, BB mentioned the executive head's transformational and highly strategic role in terms of leadership and noted that

the executive head devises the strategic improvement plan for the school and creates capacity for the leadership team to be able to lead that school and to improve it and lead effectively.

Therefore, giving details about AB's strategically oriented role and her involvement in improving school quality, BB said that 'she has the major hand in the school improvement plan, she would decide the priorities, and then she would consult on the execution of those priorities.'

Teachers' views (apart from CB2 who said that he was not sure) on AB's involvement in LfL activities are similar to those of leaders. AB is perceived to be mainly involved in coaching for leadership, lesson observations, overview of students' progress and intervention strategies, curriculum reviewing through students' results and SEF, and offering professional development opportunities.

### *Observation findings*

The associate headteacher's shadowing day reinforced her active involvement in coaching for leadership, monitoring learning and teaching through learning walks, shaping a personalized curriculum, coordinating appropriate intervention and enhancing teachers' leadership development. Modelling was also evident with AB teaching a new leadership module to secondary students, while another teacher also attended.

### *Overview*

The data collectively show AB's active instructional leadership role with a strategic orientation. Leadership responsibilities are spread and delegated with the purpose of raising the standards and to quality assure all the procedures. Based on the strategic vision of a learning-centred school, AB works within an instructional leadership dimension, as she is highly involved in these leadership practices. 'The focus on leadership and the focus on learning make very strong systems and structures. Building the capacity within your team by setting high expectations and providing high quality CPD' (AB) seem to be the amalgam of effective practices for outstanding learning organisations. In contrast, the executive head has a purely strategic role, with vision setting, curriculum planning, school improvement and change design being her major instructional responsibilities.

### Senior leaders' instructional leadership role

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The strategic school improvement plan stresses that ‘distributive leadership will be fully developed.’ The executive headteacher has allocated leadership roles to the senior and extended leadership teams, which work collectively and individually within their key strategic and operational areas with the purpose of driving improvement in learning and teaching (SEF: 18).

The quality of learning in the classroom is monitored through quality assurance procedures and the leadership team’s faculty observations (SEF: 4). All senior leaders coach for outstanding leadership and support aspiring leaders with change projects to further support school improvement (SEF: 18). BB, the senior deputy is responsible for leadership development, performance management and CPD, while CB, a deputy head, has target setting and tracking student progress and intervention under his responsibilities, and EB, an assistant head, is responsible for teaching and learning, staff development and training (staff handbook 2010-2011).

### *Findings from interviews*

BB’s learning and teaching responsibilities include the performance management procedure, coaching for leadership and monitoring faculties within her line management role. The statement ‘I shape all the teaching and learning in the school’ (EB) receives the full agreement of subject teachers and other leaders. Coaching for learning, training and developing members of the L&T group, learning shops, and learning walks are all innovative strategies for the effective management of learning and teaching, which are under the responsibility of EB.



CB highlights his instructional leadership role through his involvement in doing lesson observations for staff within the performance management procedure, participating in learning walks, and tracking students' progress. All senior leaders point that all members of the leadership team are involved in LfL activities. This is consistent with the subject teachers' views. CB1 comment that 'leadership is spread and shared across our partner school' highlights 'SL organizing of good leadership practices' dissemination.

### *Observation findings*

In the leadership team meeting, BB, CB and EB had a strong voice regarding curriculum reviewing, intervention strategies for under-achieving students and overviewing the quality of L&T within departments. Also, on the secondary leadership development day, assistant heads of intervention and inclusion, along with its partnership school leaders, shared good practices on 'overcoming barriers to learning'.

### *Overview*

The data collectively show that the three senior leaders (BB, CB, EB) contribute strongly to learning and teaching, while a prominent culture for professional dialogue is enhanced. The SLT has strategic responsibility for instructional leadership. The executive headteacher has created a school culture of equally shared instructional leadership capacity.

## Middle leaders' instructional leadership role

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The leadership surgery within communications' document confirms that leaders of faculties and year groups have identified their intervention groups and also appropriate intervention strategies are in place, while it also provides evidence about building capacity through negotiating roles and responsibilities within a faculty. Internal documents show that middle leaders and subject teachers are involved in the decision making process (via departmental SEF) on curriculum reviewing within the faculties. Faculty leaders are responsible for overseeing the data for their subject(s) and coordinating appropriate interventions, as an intervention document, SEF and faculty action plan suggest. Developmental observation, such as the learning walks, are also conducted by the faculty leaders and members of the leadership team, identifying good practice within their faculties and any points for development (staff handbook: 48).

### *Findings from interviews*

Faculty leaders' involvement in their improvement plans has been highlighted as the crucial instructional leadership responsibility within their role, based on the associate head (AB) and the senior deputy head's (BB) views. Teachers (DB1, DB3 and CB4) stress the whole faculty's involvement in the faculty's improvement plan and the line manager's role in reviewing that. BB also highlights that 'learning and teaching is on the agenda of every faculty meeting', ensuring that school vision is successfully applied to departmental learning goals and tied to students' personalised needs. All participants agreed that the head of

faculty and the line manager's role are crucial in the management of the curriculum; reviewing the curriculum is the head of faculty and key stage coordinator's responsibility, while teacher participants have an input within their department's curriculum planning.

Within curriculum management, CB1 agrees with CB4 about the allocation of teachers, who says that

if your Faculty leader has realized that you are able to teach the highest level, she will promote you. It's the faculty leader that makes sure that there is a balance on the timetable, so someone is not just getting the 'A' classes and someone gets all the difficult classes. (CB4)

DB3 says that 'reviewing the curriculum ultimately lies with the head of faculty'. However, teachers' role is important in proposing their views on reviewing the curriculum, the exam boards and setting a long term plan.

DB, the head of communications faculty, says that middle leaders are highly involved in the LfL activities, through monitoring L&T within the department in order to help teachers improve their teaching, supporting the intervention by changing student groups, dealing with data to ensure the target A\*-Cs', monitoring the faculty improvement plan and reviewing the milestones and setting the vision. Responding to the question about her role in the overall management of the curriculum, DB replied:

The Y9 has been constantly reviewed because it's the new GCSE. Anybody in charge of a Year would say to me, *we can review how our scheme works at that level, should we change?* So we are reviewing in that kind of way as a whole department.

In case of a student's under-performance, CB2, CB4 and DB4 agreed that head of faculties would discuss with the teachers about the intervention strategies to be set. DB's involvement in a developmental monitoring of teacher's performance is through the learning walks, which also create a platform for discussion among teachers.

### *Observation findings*

During the leadership team meeting observation, both heads of faculties were involved in the discussion about students' interventions and GCSE subject options changes.

### *Overview*

All teacher participants agreed that the head of faculty role is crucial in the faculty vision, curriculum management and monitoring student progress. Monitoring classroom teaching to assess quality through the learning walks is one of the main departmental roles. The findings show that middle leaders are the instructional leaders within their faculty with the purpose of driving improvement.

## **Overview of Case Study B**

The leadership team's aspiration 'to provide a vibrant learning community' (school strategic improvement plan) seems to be enhanced by collective responsibility and involvement. Instructional leadership practices are adopted by both senior and middle leaders within the framework of collaborative leadership.

The dimensions of leadership in school B captured a learning-centred leadership capacity building approach, with a focus on developing leaders within and across the schools, notably due to its NSS role. The centrality of learning through improving teaching to outstanding standards, as defined by Ofsted, was a driving force in shaping an improvement in student results. A strong connection between a collaborative pedagogical relationship and academic achievements and collegial professional learning is evident in school B, which is likely to have the potential to be a learning organization. In sum, leaders in this high-performing school were ‘more focused on teaching and learning, [acting as] a stronger instructional resource for teachers, and [were] more active participants and leaders of teacher learning and development.’ (Robinson et al., 2008: 657-658)

## **CHAPTER SIX: CASE STUDY REPORT**

### **SCHOOL C**

#### **Introduction**

School C is a medium-sized comprehensive school (391 students and 23 members of teaching staff) in the area of Attiki which is led by the headteacher (AC) who has been in post since July 2010, and one deputy head (BC). As the list of schools provided by the Directorate of Education shows, school C comprises the second best state school in one district of Attiki, based on the proportion of students who entered Greek Universities, in two consecutive school years (2008-2010)<sup>31</sup>. As Greek schools are not subject to external evaluation, the national students' exams provide the only objective basis for determining 'high performance'.

#### **Methodological Considerations**

Following the mixed method approach discussed in chapter three, the researcher gathered data using the following methods:

➤ Scrutiny of documents: as well as the policy documents that are common to both Greek case studies (see Chapter three), the researcher also scrutinized school C head's diary of school life, the head's action book, a subject adviser's (FD's) planning documents (involving a visit to school C).

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<sup>31</sup> Since 2008 until the thesis submission, both Greek researched schools remained in the same position in schools' ranking, regarding the proportion of students entered Greek Universities after sitting the panhellenic exams.

- Semi-structured interviews with the headteacher (AC) and the deputy head (BC), as well as two external interviewees, the maths school adviser (FC) and the school adviser of Greek philologists (FD).
- Semi-structured interviews with the two most experienced teachers in maths (CC) and Greek (DC), the nearest equivalent to middle leaders within English schools.
- Semi-structured interviews with eight subject teachers: mathematics (CC1), physics (CC2), biology (CC3), chemistry teacher (CC4), three Greek (DC1, DC2, DC3) and economics (EC1). Teachers from various subject fields were interviewed as these subjects are the core subjects in the pan-hellenic examinations. There were insufficient maths and Greek teachers to provide an exact parallel with the English case studies.
- Shadowing the headteacher (AC) for a day.
- Observation of a short school teachers' meeting (March 2011).

Member checking of interview records was undertaken.

## **Findings**

### Vision for Learning

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

There was no focus on learning goals, raising achievement or setting expectations in any of the school internal documents or in subject advisers' documents in contrast to the Ministerial Decision 105657/Δ1/ 8-10-2002, which sets the framework for a principal to enact instructional leadership practices, including vision orientation, as described in chapter one.

### *Findings from interviews*

Vision is a concept that is not discussed a lot. However, my vision was to change teachers' mentality at our first scheduled pedagogic meeting. Everything that happens at school should be student-oriented, and not teacher-centred. Some staff shared ideas on that, but I could not change some other colleagues' mind to follow my pedagogical expectations for this school. Establishing an effective pedagogical environment makes my role much more demanding. (AC)

This extract from the headteacher suggests an absence of extensive dialogue on the nature of the school vision, highlighting that the vision is 'top down', but that some staff did not share AC's vision. All teacher participants agreed that there is no formally established vision, although their common goal is raising students' results and encouraging them to enjoy the subjects taught at school. The school advisers' (FC, FD) focused on improving the subject knowledge and pedagogical sensibility of the teachers who are under their guidance. Moreover, FC, the maths adviser, stressed the value of transforming the teacher-centred learning to a more student-learning environment 'in which students will develop themselves as learners.'

### *Observation findings*

At the teachers' meeting, the headteacher stressed the value of enhancing students' achievement through extra curricula activities (i.e. Physical Sciences experiment competition involvement) and all teachers agreed to CC2's comment that 'we set a vision to get the very best of each child by providing them with opportunities beyond lessons'.



## *Overview*

The data show the difficulty in identifying the school's vision for learning as there are no documents addressing this issue. Although teachers agreed on the informal vision of enabling pupils to achieve to their highest level, the headteacher commented on the partly collaborative nature of the process of vision development. The drive towards enhancing teachers' pedagogical performance lies within the two subject advisers' vision framework, and that of the head.

## Curriculum management

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The minutes of the first scheduled school teachers' association meeting (13/9/2010) focused on various aspects of curriculum management, including co-ordinating the curriculum on common exam topics for the same year group, ensuring the update of each class curriculum book, and allocating responsibilities to the teaching staff with regard to the checking of teaching aids, book supplies and organizing the school programme. In the same document, the range of subject options for Grade C students has been stressed. Both subject advisers' documents (modelling lesson plans, student handouts) reveal their instructional involvement in curriculum, while the Ministerial Decision 353.1/16-10-2002 sets out the official responsibilities of subject advisers and the school head, as described in chapter one.

### *Findings from interviews*

According to the headteacher (AC), and the deputy head (BC), their role is very limited in the overall management of the curriculum. They agreed on ensuring teachers' effective engagement with the guided curriculum structure, as provided by the Pedagogical Institute (PI). As the most experienced maths and Greek teachers (CC, DC) in the school say, curriculum management is related to timely curriculum completion while 'teachers are curriculum processors', as DC suggests. Similarly, all teachers stressed the value of implementing the Pedagogical Institute's specifications in the core subjects in the pan-hellenic exams:

we're given what we've got to deliver and we make no decisions of *What* and sometimes not even on *How*. The progress of curriculum execution at Grade C is monitored by the Ministry via a document in which we report the exact page of the book, once a month. So, we show them we are on track. (BC)

Some respondents also referred to the limited role of the subject advisers. Both subject advisers agreed they are part of a hierarchical structure concerning the management of curriculum, where FC stressed the value of advisers' monitoring of the teaching material coherence with the PI targets, but he states that 'we are not allowed to make suggestions to the heart of the curriculum structure.' They also highlighted their role as mostly advisory in setting effective strategies and creating flexible curriculum pathways to maximize students' learning.

DC1 agreed with CC1 who highlighted teachers' mainly passive recipient role within curriculum meetings with the adviser, stating that 'our suggestions are not

effectively used.’ However, subject adviser FD was uncertain about the impact of her suggestions, made following the review of curriculum effectiveness:

Although I made suggestions on the depth and breadth of the teaching material in History and suggested improvements in the Curriculum, I don’t know whether subject advisors’ suggestions are ever taken into consideration by the curriculum developers.

In case of teachers’ inability to complete the ‘ambitious teaching targets’ of the Pedagogical Institute for Grade C history, FD revealed that ‘I told them to focus on the parts which are much more important for students’ examination needs.’ The head (AC) adds that there are some curriculum areas where teachers may intervene without a formal agreement, as he is not entitled to monitor teachers’ work:

We have to implement the decisions made by the Pedagogical Institute. However, a deviation from the PI structured guidelines could be made by teachers without having informed me about these changes, as long as it is for the students’ own good. I never inspect them.

All teachers agreed with the headteacher’s comment that they can unofficially make curriculum interventions, such as borrowing teaching time wisely from colleagues who have completed their teaching targets or who do not teach core subjects (e.g Religious Education, PE), with the purpose of completing the teaching targets set by the PI and preparing their students in the core subjects examined at a national level. In agreement with CC, CC2, DC2 and EC1’s perceptions about the ineffectiveness of the national examination modules’ curriculum time, the headteacher (AC) contended that:

I’m open to anything that raises our students’ achievements, although some practices are forbidden within state schools. Because I want our

students to familiarize themselves to a 3 hour panhellenic exam paper format, I have given the right to the teachers against the law to prepare 2 -3 hour exam papers within school day teaching hours. So, we have organized some simulation days within Grade C's programme. I do not mind if we apply a practice against the law, if what we do is for the improvement of student performance. Students also want it. So why should I say *No*?

### *Observation findings*

At the school teachers' meeting, no time was devoted to curriculum issues. During the headteacher's shadowing day, CC informed AC about his change to the curriculum with the purpose of offering his Grade C students extra tuition in mathematics.

### *Overview*

Curriculum framing and development are centrally driven by the Pedagogical Institute, while its effectiveness is monitored by teachers and the subject advisers. Overseeing the smooth running of curriculum management is a part of the headteacher's role whereas the subject advisers' role seems to be mainly strategic. Most teacher participants agreed that they could apply changes and modifications within their subject curriculum, under a collaborative framework, in order to meet student needs within an examination driven system.

### Evaluation of student results

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

In accordance with the relevant Presidential Decrees stated in chapter one, a striking example of school C teachers assessing class performance is described in

the school minutes book (Act 20: Pedagogical meeting for students' first term results):

- Grade C2: has got 5-6 very good students, whereas all the others have not got a very strong performance at the pan-hellenic subjects. This class has a downward course concerning their performance.

Apart from the termly student reports, there are no other school C documents which give information about evaluating individual student results. The scrutiny of FC's student progress document sample supports the subject advisers' instructional role that the Educational Law 1304/82 (article 9, par. 9) implies, notably about the nature of their involvement in students' evaluation and performance, as external leaders.

### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher and the deputy head have no official responsibility to evaluate student progress (in classes that they do not teach) through systematic and thorough reviews, apart from their involvement in the termly pedagogical meetings. There is a similar picture for the subject advisers' involvement in this process. All the interview participants agreed with the headteacher's comment that:

in the February 2011 pedagogical meeting, teachers went through each class, emphasizing on the very best and the under-performing students. We also compared class against class, so that we know where we stand. If there was any specific reason to deal with a student in a more personalized approach, a more detailed discussion of this student's progress was made. (AC)

In case of a student's under-performance, FD stressed that 'the headteacher activates mechanisms to support the students.' However, all participants agree with AC that:

none of the supporting measures for improving students' learning, such as the after school additional sessions, are still provided by the Ministry. The current educational system, which does not provide any additional support for students in state schools, forced them to private tutorials and tuition centres, although teachers provide students some additional academic support, during the time that they are assigned to have administrative responsibilities.

FC stressed the lack of official intervention mechanisms within Greek state schools, but he says 'it depends on the sensibility of the teacher if they will devote more time with their students.' Although both advisers contended that they have discussions with teachers on ways of improving teaching with the goal of raising student outcomes, teachers reflected on their own initiatives. CC1's view is in agreement with CC, DC1 and EC1 who pinpointed the individual teacher's instructional strategy to support students. CC claims that:

I work mainly with students whose performance is just about average because I cannot hold the whole class back. If I had the opportunity to teach under-performing students within a different group in order to help them raise their understanding in maths, I would do that.

Monitoring student progress on an individual basis has been acknowledged as a mechanism to support them. Unofficially personalized learning activities are undertaken by CC2 and DC1 while the headteacher is informed about individual teachers' instructional initiatives intended to improve the quality of student learning. CC2 reveals that additional support for the core module (physics) is

provided to her students during the optional course taught time ‘for the benefit of my Grade C students.’

### *Observation findings*

There were no features within this theme during AC’s shadowing day or at a teachers’ short meeting.

### *Overview*

Officially, the whole process of evaluating students’ results is driven by the teachers’ assessment verdict at the termly pedagogical meeting in which the headteacher is informed about students’ performance. However, teachers have activated unofficial learning activities to contribute to more personalized intervention, given the ending, in 2009, of the national programme of after school additional teaching. The external advisers’ role is predominantly advisory, while there is very limited discretion for official intervention mechanisms.

### Monitoring teachers’ performance

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The internal documentary analysis did not provide evidence about monitoring teachers’ performance, despite what the governmental documents imply, as shown in chapter one. However, FC’s teachers’ performance documents (18/2/2009 and 14/3/2009) reveal his involvement in monitoring, but only in the event of official complaints.

### *Findings from interviews*

All school C participants responded in an assertive way that monitoring teachers' performance in Greek secondary schools does not exist, contrary to what the policy documents imply. To support that, DC stated that 'headteachers only have the authority to evaluate newly appointed colleagues' while the headteacher added that 'it's rare to find a poor report'. AC admitted that the annual headteacher's report has a very conventional design.

You can look at the previous headteacher's report and then you write similar things, it is not based on any criteria. We usually write *All is well, the curriculum was well implemented, all students gave exams, there were no problems or we had a few problems*'. This report has no value for me. (AC)

All teachers' views are similar to the deputy head's (BC) perception that:

neither the headteacher nor the subject advisers can get into the class and stand there as a scarecrow for students so that the teacher can work better. The trade union does not give its consent to that. You may make fun of it, but, in my 14-year experience in schools, I have seen a subject adviser in the school's premises, only once, who visited due to a problem, not because s/he wanted to discuss with us, or support.

In responding to the researcher's question concerning the subject advisers' annual evaluation report on teachers' scientific and teaching competence, as the Law 2525/1997 (art.8) suggests, FD gave a decisive answer

No, this does not happen. It was in the Law but it is referred to in the evaluation programme part, which has not been implemented. This part is in abeyance. The Presidential Decree relating to evaluation has not been published, and as a sequence this is not implemented.

Both subject advisers agreed that their contribution is advisory. FD stated 'I can only advise. There is no legal framework, which gives me the authority to



evaluate teachers' performance.' FC's response, which shows disappointment with the lack of evaluation, is in line with the majority of teachers' perception (CC, CC1, CC2, CC3, CC4, DC, DC1, EC1):

Unfortunately, whatever is related to evaluation is not active, so don't search for that. Don't use the word *Evaluation* while in Greece; this word is almost prohibited. (FC)

These teachers also pinpointed students as the best judges for evaluating their work, along with students' outstanding results at the panhellenic examinations for many years, as, in some cases, they do not trust subject advisers. Some respondents stressed the lack of meritocracy in subject advisers' selection, which undervalues their role, as 'some of them do not hold that position because they are highly qualified or for being outstanding teachers, but their position is related to personal and mainly politically driven connections.' (CC)

Another theme that emerged is the limited authority that members of the school management team and the subject advisers have, in case of formal complaints about a teacher's performance. The headteacher (AC) comments on his experience of a teacher, who is not performing well due to her lack of classroom management skills. 'Observing her lesson was upon her agreement, but she refused, and I couldn't do anything for that' (AC). All the school teachers agreed that monitoring their teaching is by agreement, and CC3 strongly believes that headteacher's monitoring the teaching and learning process would be seen as surveillance by some teachers. In case of evidence of a teacher's under-performance, the headteacher seeks the subject adviser's contribution. FD points out that:

evaluation is not enacted and it is done only within the level of willingness and co-operation. We have done that in the schools that you are researching, through writing a report in which I describe the situation and make suggestions. The advisers' role stops there. Then, it goes up to the hierarchy to the Director of Education. It has happened in the past, where in some cases there was no point in making a report but in other cases there was an outcome.

FD's experience is in agreement with FC's view which also illustrates the majority of under-performing teachers' unwillingness to be monitored, even if there is formal documentation with complaints. FC also stressed the ineffectiveness of a non-systematic evaluation system in Greece and the responsibility of the headteachers to perform their role in a more professional way.

In one case, it was the headteacher's responsibility to write a report in which she would have mentioned the problems that a teacher has caused. But it was obvious that she wanted to avoid being the 'evil person'. However, the pedagogic adviser of the school and myself, as his maths adviser, had intervened and now this teacher's reality is hard, as EDE (sworn administrative investigation) will begin soon.

FD says that she indirectly evaluates teacher performance through students' learning while she is doing her modeling sessions at schools. CD agrees with CC about the lack of accountability, which is not perceived as a mechanism for improvement. DC says, 'What is the impact if the results are not good? Nothing.' Highlighting the substantial contribution that a subject adviser should have in teachers' professional development, DC also stressed:

the adviser's ideal role in monitoring teachers' pedagogical competence, in order to see whether they are able to teach in a 21<sup>st</sup> century class. That would make us accountable. There are some people who don't do their job well, but they will be still paid.

### *Observation findings*

Monitoring the work of teachers was not a feature observed by the researcher.

### *Overview*

Although the evaluation of teachers' performance is provided for in the Law (1304/82, 2525/1997, 2986/2002), this part is inactive, apart from the headteacher's authority to evaluate newly appointed teachers. Neither the headteacher nor the subject advisers are empowered to develop any meaningful strategies for monitoring teacher's performance, although it lies within their formal responsibilities.

### Mentoring and coaching

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The scrutinized internal documents provide no evidence about mentoring and coaching as models for developing teaching practice, in contrast to what the law implies about the headteachers' pedagogical responsibilities, especially for mentoring newly appointed teachers. However, a possible reason is that newly appointed staff are not usually appointed to schools in Athens. FC and FD's documents (13/4/2010, 16/12/2010, 8/3/2011) are in line with the subject advisers' pedagogical requirements regarding school visits and co-operation with teachers who are under their guidance in pedagogical areas.

### *Findings from interviews*

There was general agreement that there is nobody who is officially responsible for mentoring and coaching within the school. DC states that ‘some colleagues are against mentoring direction, because the Teachers’ Union directs them not to accept it.’ In contrast, for DC3 and CC3 mentoring lies within the ‘good fellowship’ framework but their example of mentoring colleagues showed the occasional nature of peer mentoring within a Greek school, as ‘in Greece we think that nobody in our field knows better than we do’ (CC3). Creating more active learning and teaching groups within and across schools is the subject advisers’ intention, although FC believes that:

most teachers are not interested in sharing their good practice with the purpose of improving learning and teaching practices. There are some people who believe they have conquered knowledge and there is no room for improvement...We are really interested in having people who take ownership, they are not just here to perform their job and go home.

However, sharing ideas and practices with teachers in their same field is embraced by all teachers through professional dialogues which occur informally in the staff room, during break times and at the Greek philologist team meetings. Coaching for learning, with the purpose of improving teaching, arises through sharing teaching material and practices, as DC, CC, CC2, CC3 and EC1 suggest, although they do not have the time to go and see anyone else teaching. Reflective discussions and collaboration are two main practices in this school. However, CC says that ‘collaboration, a concept that you find in school C, is not typical in other state schools. A common characteristic among schools in Greece is to have teachers who only care to do their lesson and then go home or do private tuitions in the afternoon.’ However, teachers state that AC has developed a platform for

interaction and collaboration with the purpose of developing a culture of reflection.

Both advisers referred to the discrepancy between the legal provision for the coordinating, advisory and training role of the subject advisers, and the reality:

The law makes many provisions for our role. But, how can we coach on an one-to-one basis when we are not allowed to visit teachers' classes, ...to see what works well and what doesn't? (FC)

FC agrees with FD that 'coaching, when you have 85 schools and 530 subject teachers to support instructionally, seems to be a concept that is never approachable.'

#### *Observation findings*

During AC's shadowing day, one of the themes discussed between AC and DC3 was supporting a teacher through unofficial peer-coaching. There was also a short discussion between AC and the teacher who faces communication problems, highlighting pedagogical approaches to engage students in her teaching.

#### *Overview*

The headteacher and subject advisers' involvement in coaching for learning and mentoring are not systematic due to restrictions arising from ineffectiveness in implementing the law. However, informal peer-conversations give the opportunity to teachers in the same subject area to improve their performance.

## Modelling

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

Modelling, or sharing best teaching practice across the school, was not evident in the scrutiny of the school's internal documents but it was a practice highlighted in subject advisers' termly reviews (31/3/2009 FD's modeling lesson on Grade B Ancient Greek at school C, and both FC and FD's reviews in March 2011) which is in line with the law.

### *Findings from interviews*

All the teachers and the management team members' responses shed light on the limited modelling of best practices by the advisers, and on the little evidence of modelling among colleagues within the school. Some participants (CC1, CC3, DC2, DC3) highlighted that the advisers' lack of creativity and up-to-date teaching material are among the reasons for not attending the scheduled modelling dates. However, DC was positive about the subject adviser's role (FD) and confirmed FD's point that 'I have visited school C three times, in terms of modeling good teaching practices to Greek philologists from neighbouring schools', while, DC and DC1 also stressed the value of teachers adopting the good practices and the opportunity to build on the feedback that colleagues receive during the teaching modeling days that are organized by their adviser (FD) across schools.

The science teachers (CC2, CC3 and CC4) agreed that lab experiments are being modelled for science teachers in Attiki, once or twice a year, in their school by

the Laboratory Centre of Physical Sciences (EKFE) ‘as we are one of the very few schools which have a fully armed lab’ (CC4). However, they didn’t embrace advisers’ modeling uncritically: ‘I have never had a constructive modeling of teaching approaches within a realistic classroom situation.’ (CC3).

Similarly, CC seems to have a cautious attitude towards teachers’ modelling teaching strategies within Greek schools. Related to this is the critique that

We are not open to new ideas and doing the extra mile in Greek schools. Once, when I tried to model my teaching approaches to other colleagues, the majority of the school teachers said that *this is against the law*. (CC)

However, CC stressed the value of taking the initiative to invite CC1 to one of his classes and CC1’s response showed his excitement for being invited to a model lesson to adopt effective teaching practices. Similarly, CC2 referred to her experience of unofficially modelling her teaching practices to a younger teacher. However, AC, BC and DC1 agreed with DC’s opposing view that ‘teachers are not open to attend good teaching practices modeling from colleagues or to model their lesson approaches, because we do not like to receive feedback on what we are doing and/or we think that *nobody knows better*.’

### *Observation findings*

Modelling was not observed in the school, in the headteacher’s shadowing day or at the teachers’ meeting.

### *Overview*

Modelling teaching practices is mainly undertaken by subject advisers, who either model good teaching approaches or encourage teachers to share best

practices within and across schools. Shared practices, rather than modelling, are evident within the school context whereas the advisers' exposition of teaching approaches creates a more official framework for modelling.

### Continuing professional development

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

CPD was not an issue under consideration in internal school documents. However, one example derived from the three-monthly planning documents is FD's 'in-house training seminar on Grade C Ancient Greek (Antigone Sophocles)' in school C (31.03.2009). This partially confirms the official imperatives (e.g. Law 1304/92, FEK 1340B/16-10-2002) regarding subject advisers' responsibilities to support professional development.

#### *Findings from interviews*

The interviews show general agreement about the provision of external training opportunities by the Pedagogical Institute, the subject advisers, the Prefectural Training Centre (PEK) and the Hellenic Mathematics Society. However, there are no opportunities for the headteacher and the deputy head to apply for a CPD course through which they could enhance their management knowledge and skills.

Most Greek philologists' participants agreed on the value of the training courses and seminars for improving their teaching strategies, developing their classroom management skills, and contributing in that way to their students' outcomes. For



FD, the strategy of ‘sharing good practice’, and ‘not just having teachers listening to what advisers suggest’, is the key element to teachers’ participation in her seminars with the purpose of improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that lessons are consistently good. However, for CC3 and EC1, the picture seems different as they had never had a pedagogical training course, while most teachers believed that there is no substantial contribution to knowledge and teaching skills’ development during training days. CC2 is critical, saying that ‘I think they are talking about things that are unattainable. Sometimes, I am wondering whether they are aware of the Greek school reality’, while for DC3, discouragement lies within ‘the boring and non up-to-date areas that are always on the agenda for discussion.’

There are various arguments behind the teachers’ disregard of seminars organized by advisers. AC and BC related this to the fact that seminars take place during school time, while FC, raised the problem of ‘some headteachers’ unwillingness’ to organize the school timetable in a way that will support teachers to attend seminars for their professional development.’ Venue accessibility (DC, CC3 and CC4), and financial constraints related to that, have been perceived as obstacles for attendance, while BC, also, stressed the restricted number of participants, and the selection criteria, as sources for the inequality of opportunities for leadership programmes:

I had applied four times to the Training School of Secondary Education Workers (SELME) but I was not lucky in the lottery. You could only attend these seminars if luck was with you at gambling. (BC)

Official in-school training is not evident within school C. However, most teachers agreed that informal professional dialogues among their colleagues

substitute for any lack of in-house provision. CC, the most experienced maths teacher, points out that:

school C teachers' discretion to discuss issues for our pedagogical improvement is distinctive, in comparison to other state schools I have worked at in the past. It may be because we are all experienced teachers in the Athenian schools.

FC agreed on the value of in-school training for the professional improvement of the teaching staff with the school unit, although he admitted that 'I don't do in-school training in all the schools where I have the pedagogical responsibility. It's impossible. I have worked very closely with about 10 schools.' FD also reported that in-school training differs within each school context, highlighting her focus on each school's needs. However, neither subject adviser mentioned whether they have applied in-school training in school C. The headteacher added that 'having 16 years teaching experience within secondary education, I have only seen two or three occasions when subject advisers visited schools. So, this is reality.'

### *Observation findings*

CPD was not a significant feature throughout the observations in this school. The only element of CPD in the headteacher's shadowing day was a document that the school received concerning a seminar (April 2011) on 'Assessing Composition Writing' organized by the Greek philologist's adviser, FD.

### *Overview*

CPD training in teachers' subject areas is available within and across the school, mainly through subject advisers' provision, but teachers' approach to their

professional development is adversely affected by their lack of interest in the topics covered, or the lack of covering expenses for attending. There are no opportunities for the management team to attend management and leadership courses.

### Instructional leadership and school improvement

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

School internal documents do not highlight the school's improvement planning but they provide evidence for the organisation and smooth running of the school, in contrast to the law which refers to the pedagogical role of senior stakeholders for organizational improvement. The subject advisers' documents (e.g. the three-month review), which highlight their lead in modeling lessons and organizing training seminars, as well as FC's teacher's evaluation document, suggest their active role in instructional leadership practices for the improvement of teachers' practices.

#### *Findings from interviews*

A positive teaching and learning environment has been highlighted by all the interview participants as a pathway to improvement. Most interviewees noted that their newly appointed headteacher is driven by his target to create a collaborative learning environment for all the teachers, and an improvement of the learning and teaching culture within the school by enhancing the quality of learning through supporting teachers to implement their own intervention strategies. CC1 points out that:

AC has a leading role in the improvement of this school, bearing the teachers down on the changes he wants to make in order to create a nice learning environment for all.

Contributing to school improvement is a collective responsibility among the teaching staff. The deputy head (BC) states that ‘we all have a shared goal to work on the key aspects of having a better school and we have succeeded. Results have shown our improvement journey.’ All teachers stated that their main contribution in school improvement is through offering quality teaching to students. It is clear that they have a practitioner-focused approach towards school improvement, while the subject advisers’ instructional role is through providing teachers with pedagogical support to improve their teaching practices.

### *Observation findings*

The observations provided little evidence about school improvement. However, school improvement lies at the heart of an informal professional dialogue between the headteacher and a teacher who is under-performing, and the head’s discussion with DC3 on the possibility of providing peer-coaching support to the above mentioned teacher, and certain discussions about individual student support.

### *Overview*

The headteacher’s intention to create a culture of collaboration, with the purpose of improving learning among school teachers, has been central to change. The emphasis on school improvement is restricted by the limited instructional leadership role of the headteacher, and the subject advisers’ involvement in ensuring the improvement of teachers’ learning.

## The principal's instructional leadership role

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The headteacher's involvement in instructional leadership practices is not clearly evident. However, the minutes book states that:

- AC informed the school teachers' association about the curriculum optional subjects' (Act 5- 13/9/2010), and
- AC, after having made a general school term evaluation, pinpointed the need to overcome certain weaknesses for school improvement (Act 20- February 2011).

### *Findings from interviews*

All internal and external participants agreed that most attention is accorded to managerial and administrative tasks, with less involvement in instructional activities, because of the requirements of the educational law. The headteacher revealed that:

up to now, activities which are related to instructional leadership are not within headteachers' formal responsibilities in Greece. The new draft of educational law (in Sept. 2011) may include them in the head's role. However, for the time being, the *How headteachers run the school* is mainly based on a subjective way of managing the school. The unpleasant part of a headteacher's job is dealing with bureaucratic tasks, which are the main obstacle to spending time on the pedagogical support in your school. (AC)

All teachers confirmed that bureaucracy within the educational system prevents AC from devoting a lot of time to pedagogical activities. However, CC1 claimed that:

in a galloping bureaucratic system a headteacher in a Greek school cannot be an instructional leader, however AC has adapted his high quality management skills within this school's framework, he has changed the school climate to a more effective learning environment and he has succeeded to support teachers in their pedagogical tasks.

This view was confirmed by CC4, DC and EC1.

### *Observation findings*

AC's involvement in the core business of schooling, teaching and learning, was highlighted by his tendency to address instructional issues while managing the smooth running of the school. For example, he introduced changes to the internal curriculum, as an intervention strategy to enhance Grade C students' learning, informal professional dialogue with a teacher who is under-performing, and coaching support for a teacher.

### *Overview*

Instructional leadership is not given top priority because of the expectation of headteachers' involvement in bureaucratic work, which does not leave the space for other activities to emerge, and due to the ineffective enactment of the law. The data collectively show AC's complex and multidimensional role in order to create a school learning community which will be able to sustain its high-performance. However, AC does not see himself as an instructional leader, in contrast to the teachers who believe that he has shown some instructional leadership skills, mainly as a vision builder and curriculum reviewer (for the benefit of the final year students), despite being preoccupied with administrative duties.

## Deputy head's instructional leadership role

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

There is no evidence from school internal documents about the role of the deputy head (BC) in instructional leadership, while the educational law 1566/85 (article 11) provides few guidelines about this.

### *Findings from interviews*

There is a wide gap between the deputy head's view and that of other school participants. BC argues that he is actively involved in instructional leadership. He said 'I devote a lot of hours per week to this issue'. In contrast, AC did not make any reference to his IL contribution, but stated that 'it is the subject advisers' role to deal with the pedagogical aspect of teaching and learning.' Similarly, CC and DC pinpoint the vagueness of the educational law regarding the deputy head's role:

However, if a deputy wants to be involved in these activities, he could. The deputy has less teaching hours than we do, should take part in running the school, but BC is slightly involved in running the school activities. So, what's the benefit for the school? To me, a deputy head should have contributed more to a school. (DC)

### *Observation findings*

No instructional leadership activities were observed from the deputy head.

### *Overview*

The vague educational framework seems to lead participants to perceive the deputy head's role differently. BC considers himself as an instructional leader, in contrast to the perceptions of other research participants. Since a deputy head's

role is primarily administrative, the law does not leave any room for managing the school within an IL perspective.

### Subject advisers' instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

Although the pedagogical dimension of subject advisers' role is supported by the law, there is no evidence in internal documents for those external stakeholders' instructional role within school C. However, scrutinized their documents, the enactment of some dimensions of IL is evidenced (e.g. teachers' professional development, modelling, monitoring a teacher's performance).

#### *Findings from interviews*

Although subject advisers' responsibility lies within the framework of training, coordinating activities to boost performance, evaluating performance and collaborating school management, only a minority of participants claim that they execute these activities. The headteacher argues that the subject advisers' role is very limited, stressing that 'the only thing they can do is to advise teachers, as they do not have the authority to go in depth.' BC adds that in 'this current year I have only once seen a subject adviser visiting our school, and that was after my invitation about a pedagogical problem that we face.' There are differences in the way teachers approached their subject adviser's involvement in instructional leadership practices, as the majority of teachers (AC, BC, CC, CC2, CC3, CC4 and EC1) have 'never seen' their subject adviser, in contrast to the other teachers



who have a closer relationship through in-house training and instructional support.

In contrast to most internal participants, both subject advisers highlighted their involvement in instructional and curricular decisions, whereas the aspect of the educational law related to subject advisers' responsibility for monitoring is perceived to be inactive by both FC and FD. Their direct involvement in organising training seminars for their teachers' professional development, and modeling teaching practices, was reported earlier in this chapter.

### *Observation findings*

There is no observed evidence of subject advisers' IL activities.

### *Overview*

The subject advisers' role in instructional leadership practices is more prominent than that of senior school managers (AC, BC). However, it is unclear to what extent FC and FD are the instructional leaders within school C. Most school-based participants say that they are 'ghost subject advisers'.

### Most experienced subject teachers' instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The school's documents do not refer to the role of CC and DC, the most experienced maths and Greek teachers, respectively, as within Greek schools there is no distinction between the most experienced and the least experienced teachers.

### *Findings from interviews*

As there are no middle leaders within Greek schools, the questions were addressed to the role of the most experienced teachers as instructional leaders. There was general agreement that CC and DC do not have a leading role in school improvement or instructional leadership. However, DC stressed the value of developing the Greek philologists' community within the school, in which they operate in networks of shared expertise in order to give support to their classes. All the Greek philologists agreed with DC who stated that:

there are colleagues who are open to professional discussions and we do curriculum planning together for our lessons in the same year group classes, we also share material and teaching approaches. But this is not formally scheduled to happen and not everybody is involved. (DC)

A similar picture of professional discussions and collaboration applies to the maths teachers. Also, most subject teachers' active involvement in curriculum unofficial modifications and provision of extra instructional support to students, may add to their instructional leadership role.

### *Observation findings*

CC and DC's involvement in instructional leadership practices was not evident.

### *Overview*

There are no middle leaders in Greek state secondary schools, so the researcher decided to opt for the experienced subject teachers as the nearest equivalent. However, they do not have managerial responsibility for their colleagues. Hence, leading teaching and learning is the teacher's responsibility, and a culture of

sharing practices and curriculum decision making with the purpose of enhancing consistency in subject teaching, has been highlighted.

## **Overview of Case Study C**

Although the Greek Law states that the headteacher should mainly be a manager-administrator, while instructional leadership is officially the subject advisers' responsibility, there is a discrepancy between the educational law (2525/97) and what happens in reality within school C. Subject advisers are perceived to be mainly involved in modelling and organizing training seminars to boost teachers' professional development within their own subject area. AC balances managerial responsibilities and pedagogical involvement in order to create a culture of instructional improvement, with a vision for learning and curriculum management to boost students' performance.

The label of 'semi-instructional leader' could have been used informally for those subject teachers who are unofficially involved in practices which are not formally distributed to them. In the absence of subject advisers, some teachers take the lead in instructional oriented activities, such as managing curriculum, evaluating students' progress, establishing professional dialogues through peer-coaching and sharing of teaching practices, with the purpose of improving teaching and learning, in an untypical (for Greece) collaborative learning environment.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CASE STUDY REPORT**

### **SCHOOL D**

#### **Introduction**

School D is the best state school in terms of the pan-hellenic national student examinations in one district in the prefecture of Attiki. It is distinctive in that is a model/pilot Music school, with 439 students and 184 members of teaching staff, including the headteacher (AD) and two deputy heads, BD the deputy head for General core and optional modules, and the deputy head for Music studies. The generous pupil–staff ratio is the effect of a dual identity school, both for general and music education, as well as the existence of substitute and supply teachers in Greek state schools (59 non permanent staff in school D). AD has been the headteacher of the school for 15 years while BD has been a deputy head for 4 years, and their teaching commitments are decreased to 1 hour and 7 hours respectively, in contrast to headteachers and deputies in other Greek comprehensive schools, due to the pilot nature of school D (Educational Law 1566/85 article 31 par. 9).

#### **Methodological Considerations**

This case study followed the pattern set out for the whole enquiry (chapter three), involving the following methods in school D:

- Scrutiny of documents: internal documents (see chapter three) and policy documents (see chapter one) that are common in the two Greek case studies, the headteacher's report on school D organization and management for the school

year 2009-2010, the Educational Law 3966/2011 (FEK 118/2011) for Model Experimental Schools, along with FD's documents (13/4/2010 and 9/3/2011) on three-month pedagogical activities planning, involving visits to school D, were scrutinised.

- Semi-structured interviews with the headteacher (AD) and one deputy head (BD), as well as interviews involved the same two external interviewees - the school adviser of maths (FC) and the adviser of Greek philologists (FD)- whose generic comments discussed in case study C (see chapter six).
- Semi-structured interviews with the two most experienced teachers in maths (CD) and Greek philology (DD).
- Semi-structured interviews with eight subject teachers: two mathematics teachers (CD1 and CD3), two physics teachers (CD2 and CD4), one chemistry teacher (CD5), three Greek philologists (DD1, DD2, DD3). The reasons for this sample choice have been described in chapter six.
- Shadowing the headteacher (AD) for a day.
- Observation of a short school teachers' meeting (8<sup>th</sup> April 2011).

Member checking of interview transcriptions was undertaken.

## **Findings**

### Vision for Learning

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The internal data and subject advisers' data do not indicate a focus on vision for learning.

### *Findings from interviews*

As the headteacher (AD) and the deputy head (BD) pointed out, helping teachers to provide the most effective support for students' learning is the main goal of the school, in addition to supporting teachers to approach the top-down decision policy in an effective way. There are different views amongst teachers, with the majority (CD, CD2, CD5, DD, DD1, DD3) stressing general knowledge provision and achieving the highest potential in the national examination results while, for the other teachers (CD1, CD3 and DD2), vision is linked to the development of good musicians and also enhancing an indirect pathway of learning, 'by participating in various educational programmes that could enhance students' creativity, and not only results-driven learning', (DD2). CD4's perception of vision is in accordance with FD's (subject adviser) view (see chapter six).

Only a small proportion of students acknowledge our role within their learning, contrary to the majority who link their success to private tuition centres. My vision is to make them love my sessions. (CD4)

### *Observation findings*

At a short meeting, AD discussed with BD the future school's role of creating a learning organization, more open to a cultural society.

### *Overview*

Due to the dual-dimensional nature of school D, as both a model school, and a music school, there is no fully agreed view on its vision. However, data show

that creating exam-oriented learning and music expertise are the two main aspects of the school's vision.

### Curriculum management

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

According to the minutes of school teachers' association meeting (1/10/2010), curriculum management in regards to subject teachers' allocation to classes is the headteacher's responsibility. In the same document the significance of CD1, CD5 and DD1's co-teaching in interdisciplinary areas has also been highlighted (Act 38/ 26-1-2011). Expanding curriculum is evident through the teachers' consensus for Grade A and B students' involvement in extra-curricular activities (October 2010, Act 36/20-1-2011) with the purpose of enhancing students' learning, as mentioned in the headteacher's annual report (2009-2010).

#### *Findings from interviews*

The headteacher (AD) and the deputy head (BD) stressed school D's leading role in curriculum development for music.

Although the existence of Music modules heads are not provided for in the law, I have created this unofficial role, so that one of my deputies is in charge of school music events organization and curriculum design and planning. (AD)

Curriculum roles are allocated formally and informally. Although AD states that he 'utilizes the most experienced teachers as leaders in their subject area', this is

not widely confirmed by them. BD agrees with AD who stressed that the headteacher allocates teaching roles on the basis of teachers' expertise:

I have the authority to intervene in the teaching allocation but without ordering somebody to do it. At the school teaching association meeting, this decision is made by consensus. However, before the meeting, I artfully allocate core modules teaching for the national examinations. It seems that when the direction is given top-down, they are flattered..., and they ask to teach these modules, and I support them in the meeting. So, I always try to find a way to drive them to my direction. (AD)

There is a general agreement among all school participants about the centralised curriculum, while BD notes that:

what has to be taught is given by the PI. The pan-hellenic modules are very boring because it is decided what needs to be taught. In contrast, all the other modules can be fascinating, as teachers have some flexibility, based mainly on students' interests.

CD5's perception aligns with CD's view about the ineffectiveness of the pan-hellenic modules teaching material:

In many cases I don't follow the Curriculum guiding directions of the PI, even at the pan-hellenic modules, because practice is different from what the documents say. At the Pan-hellenic modules, I don't teach exactly what needs to be taught, but I go deeper. We don't do the Pedagogical Institute tasks, as there is no correlation between the PI guidelines and the exam papers. I don't want my students to fail. So, I prepare my own material with tasks, because the exam papers are demanding. (CD)

Monitoring curriculum effectiveness lies within 'the headteacher's responsibilities, as AD has to intervene when a class or a year group is far behind in the teaching material that should have been covered, based on the PI's guidance' (CD1). DD supports the argument by saying that:

AD's intervention is through 'pushing' us to take more hours through internal changes with other teachers. But the headteacher cannot play any other role. We have self control and self-evaluation on the progress



of the teaching. However, the Directorate of Education monitors if we are on track regarding the pan-hellenic modules.

The majority of teachers (CD, CD2, CD4, DD, DD1, DD2, DC3) pinpointed year group subject teachers' involvement within the Grade A, B and C curriculum through collaborating with each other, in terms of embellishing the teaching material, restructuring curriculum in terms of students' future needs and sharing teaching practices. However, teachers highlighted that due to the tight PI prescriptions, the amendments in the pan-hellenic module in Grade C are careful constructed and limited. The headteacher perceives his role within a more advisory driven direction. 'I can only advise teachers who face some issues in their modules or I can give them the opportunity to act independently when it is for the students' own good.' (AD)

In terms of curriculum management, CD5 gives an example of innovative teaching methods within a panhellenic module, with the purpose of inspiring Grade C students to approach their learning from a 'non-rote' perspective.

Teaching final year students (Grade C) is like teaching a 'parrot', as they learn everything by heart, by rote. It's totally students' brain destruction. However, I have created my own website where I provide extra teaching material for students and colleagues. Also, last year I did 10 tele-sessions (one session per week) with Grade C students, so that we could expand on their queries on PI's teaching material. It was an extra supportive teaching tool for students, and a way of making students think beyond the structured framework of PI curriculum.

The ineffectiveness of central monitoring of curriculum management is highlighted by CD2, whose point also raises an issue regarding teachers' discretion to be adapted to teaching circumstances:

A good result of a messy educational situation in Greece is that nobody monitors whether a teacher who teaches both core and optional modules in a year group, follows the time allocation by the book or uses more time in the core modules in order to help their students' learning. Teaching time for the panhellenic modules is not enough, so we have to think of alternatives.

All teachers agreed with CD that subject advisers are rarely seen. DD2 stresses subject advisers' inability to manage curriculum due to the large number of schools for which they have responsibility.

### *Observation findings*

At an unscheduled meeting, teachers discussed with AD and BD about internal timetable changes in Grade B's programme. At AD's shadowing day, his administrative responsibility role was predominant, as he was dealing with managing timetable changes due to the earlier announcement of the Panhellenic examination dates.

### *Overview*

Centralisation arises through the strong curriculum control that the Pedagogical Institute undertakes in order to ensure the implementation of curriculum policy. However, teacher participants' perception about the headteacher's role suggest that he monitors the implementation of curriculum in an unobtrusive way, while the subject advisers' curriculum role is regarded as invisible. In contrast, the subject teachers' active and systematic involvement in the instructional approaches to their common subjects enhances teacher leadership in curriculum management.

## Evaluation of student results

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

Termly monitoring of student progress, in which underachieving and good student results are identified, has been highlighted in the school minutes book (26<sup>th</sup> January 2011), through analyzing and sharing data. An example of teachers' evaluation of class termly results is:

- Grade A1: Most teachers agreed that it is an underachieving class with a wide range of weaknesses and limited consciousness of students' lack of subject knowledge. (School minutes book, Act 38/ 2011: scheduled pedagogical meeting for Term A)

However, there is no evidence of tracking students' progress, in order to provide individual or group support and guidance. In the head's annual report (2009-2010), the students' very good pan-hellenic examination results are praised.

### *Findings from interviews*

There is general agreement about the headteacher's role in evaluating student results, which is not systematic and is only evident at the scheduled termly pedagogical meetings. In contrast, DD3 believes that 'AD monitors students' progress closely. He really cares about each student's progress, and he monitors that.' The deputy head (BD) adds that 'we are both aware of students' progress through the electronic system (NESTORAS) in which we can see the class average grade and each student's grade in comparison to that.'

All participants agreed that year group meetings, class meetings and subject teachers' meetings, as well as informal discussions, are held in order to monitor

students' progress and make the necessary decisions on their performance. In terms of student underachievement, all school participants agreed that there are no school intervention strategies to ensure that underachieving students will be on track to make progress. However, most teachers are in agreement with CD4's argument that 'we strive individually for helping students who are academically challenging students. We also collaborate with colleagues to achieve that.'

The school's strategy to address students' under-performance also emerged through interviews. The headteacher (AD) highlights the provision of personalized learning within the school:

we have activated mechanisms of supporting our students, current and graduates who want to sit exams again, as there are no official intervention strategies for those who do not achieve well. Students can have a non-fee individual tutorial with a subject teacher on the module they have underachieved towards their target. However, I don't want to give you the impression that here we do personalized learning for all students, anytime they need it. No! No! Unfortunately, these happen only occasionally.

Although no intervention groups are in place within school D, the majority of teachers have stressed the importance of their personalised approach to students' learning, which is activated within a collegial framework. BD explains that:

there are many colleagues who take a student who is struggling with a lesson from PE, Religion Education, under teachers' agreement, and help them. There is an internal cover in terms of collegiality. We also have internal timetable changes for the students' own good. It is provided for in the educational law to make internal changes when you are far behind from the teaching schedule that the PI expects.

DD2 and DD3 also admit that school D teachers have agreed to collaborate within the framework of extra support provision to students who are underachieving CD5's explains that

those who need extra support bunk off their classes with the consent of the teacher, and we have individual tutorials with ‘no charge’. In this school we have less teaching hours in comparison with teachers who teach in other state comprehensive schools due to the fact that we are a model school, so we have the time to support them within school, but we are not obliged to do that. But, *How can I close the door to ‘those two eyes’ who need my support, and tell them You’d better go to a private tuition centre (frontistirion) to learn.* No, I can’t say that.

### *Observation findings*

Evaluation was not a feature of the observed days in school D.

### *Overview*

School participants highlighted the synergy between the management team of the school and teachers regarding the evaluation of student results, which is linked to raising aspirations. Another theme which emerged is monitoring students’ progress in which teachers have agreed, with the consent of the head, to provide supplementary support to individual students who need extra instructional support. The subject advisers’ role in evaluation was not mentioned by the participants.

### Monitoring teachers’ performance

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

There are no school D documents providing evidence about monitoring teachers’ performance. The generic data from policy documents are discussed in chapter one while the subject advisers’ documents, common to both Greek schools, are described in chapter six.

### *Findings from interviews*

Responding to the question about the headteacher's role in monitoring teachers' performance, AD stated that:

in practice, teachers' evaluation is not activated. A head has to present any problems in the school's annual report, but not evaluating positively the staff. The first time we hear the word *Evaluation* is this year, when our school was involved in the pilot programme of school's evaluation.

All participants agreed with DD1's view that:

in reality, a headteacher in Greece does not have much authority. Whether a teacher in a Greek school works well or not, there is the same confrontation from the government's side. We were evaluated only as newly appointed teachers. Since then, only our students and the headteacher acknowledge our contribution. There is nothing official.

However, CD, CD3, CD4, DD1 and DD2 refer to informal teachers' evaluation.

BD admitted that

monitoring teachers is not in our agenda, but we always discuss with AD how teachers perform, and if a teacher lacks pedagogical competence, we indirectly find ways to make them improve, mainly through creating opportunities for professional discussions, so that teachers' themselves to see what does not work well in their practices and intervene.

CD3 adds that:

the head knows who performs well and he finds a way of utilizing the under-performing person differently, e.g to teach at a junior high school.

BD provides an example of AD's formal engagement with a teacher's insufficient professional performance, in which AD had followed a hierarchical approach to support him, followed by an official report to the subject adviser. BD also adds:

What practice has shown is that the disciplinary punishment by the EDE (sworn administrative investigation) can leave you speechless. The final punishment for a colleague's inappropriate professional attitude was a two-day salary deduction. Can you believe that? Generally speaking, a headteacher's hand and foot are bound in a Greek school, and the Directorate of Education rarely provides any solution to a problem like that.

All participants agreed with CD2 that 'this evaluation procedure doesn't lead anywhere.'

The majority of participants (BD, CD, CD5, DD1, DD2, DD3) agree with CD1 that 'unfortunately the Teachers' Union considers teacher's evaluation as a threat and not as a means of improving our teaching.' The subject adviser (FC) says that the Teachers' Union refusal in accepting any form of teachers' evaluation, through monitoring, could be an obstacle to the professional development of teachers.

Assuming that a headteacher or adviser says *I want to attend your class in order to evaluate your performance*, this cannot happen. In Greece that would give rise to a storm of protest and there would be a general outcry from OLME's side (Greek Federation of State School Teachers of Secondary Education) etc. Those who lead in politics know well that evaluation is not implemented in Greece, and mainly within education. (FC)

In discussing the subject advisers' role in evaluating teachers' performance, participants's (BD, CD, CD1, CD2, CD5, DD and DD2) confirm the view of AD, who said:

This part of the law has never been performed. There was much opposition against this governmental policy. So, students remain the best judges.

FC, the maths adviser, adds that teachers' evaluation should take place:

if I could have a direct supervision of all schools. Up to now, it can only happen after the headteacher's invitation in case of problem solving when a formal accusation occurs. In no other case do I have the authority to interfere with a teacher.

### *Observation findings*

There were no examples of evaluation during school D's observations.

### *Overview*

There is no official monitoring of teachers within Greek state schools, as evaluation is not enacted, contrary to what article 8 of the educational law 2525/1997 implies. However, most teachers highlight AD's unofficial evaluative role, while an occasional synergy (between AD and BD) for teachers' informal monitoring was part of their role. In case of a teacher's underperformance, participants are aware of the official extent of this process but the outcome of the EDE is not an exemplary punishment.

### Mentoring and coaching

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

There is no evidence of mentoring and coaching undertaken by any member of the school community, within school D's internal documents.

#### *Findings from interviews*

Data show that the participants did not embrace the practice of mentoring and coaching. The headteacher says



I couldn't have been a mentor for anybody, as I have never been 'the star teacher' because I was more involved in management.

BD's perception of the potential role of the headteacher as a mentor contrasts with DD3's argument that, 'although AD has a charismatic personality as a leader, he cannot be the mentor within our subject field, as he is not actively involved in teaching commitments.' Similarly, CD1, CD3, DD3 agree with DD who says that 'nobody plays the role of the mentor' (DD), contrary to CD2, CD4, DD1 and DD2's argument that the headteacher supports them pedagogically when needed, as the subject advisers' work is not evident within schools.

BD highlights her experience of being the unofficial mentor of newly appointed supply teachers:

by guiding them in our common subject area, sharing with them teaching techniques, lesson plans and supporting them pedagogically. They also invited me in their classes to see them in action and then they were asking for feedback.

There is also evidence of the informal professional dialogue among teachers within the same field and across different subject fields, through organising informal meetings for each year group and for each class. AD, BD, CD, CD2, CD3 and DD2 also highlight that peer-coaching, in terms of sharing material, giving advice and collaborating pedagogically, is evident, while CD3 gives an example of an experienced teacher's role in unofficial coaching.

I have a weekly meeting with CD, the most experienced maths teacher, in terms of helping me develop my teaching practices in maths for the panhellenic exams (Grade C), as real-classroom situations are not taught at seminars. I feel free to say *'I'm thinking of presenting that in this way..What do you think? How do you say that?'*. We share!

However, AD explains the difficulty in encouraging teachers to share their good teaching practices with colleagues.

The fact that Greek teachers' performance has not been evaluated, for many years, makes many teachers think that they are the Kings in their Kingdom. It's not easy to encourage teachers to coach each other, especially coaching those who face teaching difficulties. However, what I do is that I ask a teacher, who is respectful and knows how to approach colleagues, to help a teacher.

Responding to the question about the subject advisers' role, the headteacher said 'they could have a mentoring role if they had fewer schools under their pedagogical responsibility. BD's view is more critical:

the subject advisers as mentors? No way! I believe that the subject advisers' role as an institution has failed in the way that it works nowadays. Their role is very conventional. I don't think they play a significant role in the pedagogical process.

DD3 justifies his argument for not perceiving subject advisers as mentors, as follows:

They cannot evaluate the progress of teachers and their teaching performance. So, how can they guide us individually? The Union would never let it happen. To a greater or lesser extent the Teacher's Union may be right, as many subject advisers are appointed based on some criteria which are not transparent and do not ensure their expertise quality.

### *Observation findings*

Mentoring and coaching were not evident during observations.

### *Overview*

The data show that there are contrasting views about the mentoring role of the head, while the subject advisers' role is perceived as passive and invisible. In contrast, the majority of respondents highlighted informal discussions on

teaching and learning as the predominant practice within a peer-coaching framework.

## Modelling

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

Scrutinising the minutes of the school teachers' meetings (Act 38/ 26-1-2011), the school's intention to be more involved in modeling is highlighted:

AD's suggestion that each school educator should do two modeling lessons annually for the improvement of teaching, after following the example of DD1, D1 and CD5's modelling co-teaching, has been approved by the teachers' association.

AD's annual school report illustrates the school's co-operation with FC and FD in organizing model lessons. Both researched advisers' termly review documents provide evidence of modeling across schools, with an emphasis on FD's modeling (9/3/2011) in school D.

### *Findings from interviews*

Modelling teaching practices has been highlighted as an instructional leadership activity by teachers of school D. AD agrees with BD, who argues that 'we encourage teachers to visit their colleagues' classes, and this happens very often between philologists, maths and physics teachers.' CD1, DD1, DD2 and DD3 say that they have modelled their good teaching practices 'to colleagues who are well-disposed towards us' (DD1). DD2 says that some teachers are reluctant to model their teaching, as they perceive that as a threat and an indirect form of

evaluation, while adding that ‘last year, university students came to attend a modeling lesson, because we are a model school.’

All school participants agreed with CD2 about the significance of ‘sharing teaching practices:

What we do here is invite colleagues to our classes and then we discuss based on colleagues’ feedback. We say *Could I come to your class to see how you teach this part?* You know, it’s totally within a friendly framework. I’ve done that two-three times. But there are colleagues who do that more often.

CD5 contended that ‘I’m against modeling teaching because it can be fake [...] but my classroom door is always open to all colleagues to come and see and share. I like having a professional audience.’

Another theme which emerged is the potential for school D to demonstrate models of teaching due to its school type (model school):

a few subject advisers treat us as a pilot/ model school and approach us in order to organise modeling lessons for other schools, two or three times a year. Our school has the dynamic to become a teachers’ training centre, but they haven’t utilized us as much as they can. (AD)

Disproportionate attention has been paid to subject advisers’ modeling teaching.

CD1, CD3 and CD5’s perceptions on modelling lessons organised by subject advisers are as critical as those of CD:

subject advisers’ modeling is ‘a frame-up theatre... like a game’. There is no point in discussing the subject advisers’ role in that because they are like the ornaments we have in our house. They are figureheads.

In contrast, the majority of philologists (DD1, DD2, DD3) stress the value of FD's modelling lesson.

### *Observation findings*

Modelling teaching practices was not a feature of observations in school D.

### *Overview*

Modelling is not an IL practice that the headteacher and the deputy head undertake, as this is not within their official responsibilities. However, it has been embraced by the teaching staff mainly within a shared teaching practices model, while a small proportion also model lessons within school D and across other schools in the district. There are varied responses on the role of subject advisers in modelling good practice.

### Continuing professional development

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

AD's annual school report shows teachers' active involvement, as trainers, in a three-day seminar organized for teachers of other schools in the prefecture of Attiki. In the same document, FD's collaboration is evident in terms of organizing a one-day conference within school D, while FD's term review (13/4/2010) also shows her active role in running a seminar (17/3/2010) within school D for teachers responsible for *Effective Writing Workshops* across the schools in Attiki.

### *Findings from interviews*

School D provides training to colleagues of other schools, as AD, BD and DD3 highlighted.

Because of the nature of this school, both a pilot/experimental and a Music high school, we have the expertise in organizing pedagogical seminars for music teachers who have no teaching experience or for those who didn't have any pedagogical input at the University. (AD)

AD states that teachers are encouraged to attend seminars organised by subject advisers but he highlights the difficulty of teachers attending those training seminars which are held during school time. BD stressed the school's support for CPD opportunities at postgraduate level 'by accommodating teachers with the school timetable.' Additionally, DD raised a point about the lack of financial support to attend conferences, and she addressed the non transparent and subjective financial support to union members.

All school respondents agreed that subject advisers organise seminars with the purpose of providing training opportunities for teachers within their pedagogical responsibility. However, several teachers (DD, DD2, DD3, CD, CD1, CD4) indicate that there is no in-house training provided by subject advisers relevant to school D's teachers needs.

The teachers' responses show a discrepancy between teachers in the same subject field, and across different fields, on the value and importance of the training seminars which are held or organized by their subject advisors:

Very nice training seminars are organized by our subject adviser (FC) or EKFE. I think this kind of training is very important for our professional development, but it is optional. (CD2)

In contrast CD and CD5 agree with CD4 who convincingly argued that:

there is no way that I'll miss my class in order to go to our subject adviser's seminars or EKFE seminars. Whenever I've attended these seminars, they are always similar. We don't hear anything interesting. All presentations are good in theory but not applicable in practice. So, why should I go? (CD4)

However, DD3, a Philologist, perceives her subject adviser's (FD) training role as an important one, highlighting the value of 'training support to teaching and learning'.

Another theme which emerged is teachers' (DD, DD2, DD3, CD, CD1, CD4) initiatives to create a reflective pedagogical platform in which teachers in the same academic field of expertise participate in discussions to maximize their learning. CD3's mentoring experience with CD shed light on internal and unofficial provision of CPD within school D, while she also criticises subject advisers' seminars:

I am not fond of going to our subject adviser's seminars because I don't want to gain knowledge on something that may not be applicable to real life teaching situations. You know, I don't want to use students as guinea-pigs in my teaching. Why should I ask help from a stranger, when I have colleagues in my school who can help me? A beneficial continuous professional development for me is through improving my professional well-being with the help of the most experienced maths teacher, so that next year when CD retires, I will be able to teach the pan-hellenic exam maths module.

### *Observation findings*

No CPD activities took place during the observation.

## *Overview*

Teachers do not perceive subject advisers' training seminars very positively due to the lack of up-to-date subject knowledge which does not lead to their improvement and development. Collegiality is identified as a mechanism to enrich teachers' teaching and learning training needs, while CD3's professional development provides one example of unofficial personalised in-house pedagogical development. Official in-house training is available only for music teachers of the prefecture, with the purpose of enabling them to develop their pedagogical background.

## Instructional leadership and school improvement

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

School D's internal documents (minutes of the school meetings [38/26-1-2011] and the headteacher's annual report), and subject advisers' documents, highlight the relationship between IL practices and school improvement through an emphasis on modelling teaching practices and providing CPD opportunities. Also, the school's initiative to organise training seminars for music teachers are highlighted as a practice driving the wider improvement of schools in the prefecture (headteacher's annual report 2009-10).

### *Findings from interviews*

Improving school performance was the main target that AD set, when first appointed, and he highlighted the creation of an effective learning environment,



through ensuring the best possible teaching staff for students, as the main contributing element to enhancing students' learning.

My school improvement intervention plan begins at the end of each school year. If I can press those who make the staff selection, the local PYSDE, I do that, as my goal is to bring colleagues into my school who are advanced teachers and want to work in this school again. I try to ensure that Grade C modules are taught by the most advanced teachers in terms of experience and teaching competence, but I also create the space for those who teach younger classes to learn from Grade C teachers, as they will need to do Grade C lessons in the future. So, I have contributed to our school improvement directly. (AD)

All respondents see the headteachers' role as crucial in organizing the smooth running of the school for improvement, highlighting his mediated effect on learning outcomes. The collaboration of the school management team with the teaching staff led to the development of 'a learning organisation driven to this outstanding result' as BD states. DD2 highlights the significance of teachers' collaboration in learning, a view endorsed by several other teachers (CD1, CD2, CD3, DD2, DD3). Participants also stress the extensive analysis of students' performance within the pedagogical meetings as well as within informal short meetings, in which unofficial intervention practices for underperforming students' learning are discussed. CD5 also highlights the initiatives of individual teachers to motivate students to evaluate his performance through a pan-hellenic teachers' rating system ([www.ratemyteachers.gr](http://www.ratemyteachers.gr)).

Most participants (CD, CD1, CD2, CD3, CD4, DD, DD1, DD2) agreed that their contribution to school improvement is via their teaching. DD1, CD2 agrees with CD1 that 'our teaching is inspiring through organising disciplinary lessons and

motivating students to be active in the learning process.’ However, CD5 adds a caution about teachers’ contribution to students’ learning:

Although most of us in this school have created a nice learning environment for students and staff, in which we can work well, we are not the only contributors to students’ good results. Their success is not only the outcome of good teaching within the school. Well, yes, the school helps but, you cannot measure that, when students are also attending private lessons’. (CD5)

### *Observation findings*

There was no evidence of instructional leadership, directly related to school improvement, during the researcher’s observations.

### *Overview*

Facilitating teachers’ effective engagement with the Pedagogical Institute (PI) curriculum, through AD’s strategic allocation of curriculum modules, the informal ongoing evaluation of students’ results, and the application of unofficial intervention practices, along with peer-coaching, the increasing development of modeling teaching practices within the school, and the school’s initiative to develop music teachers’ pedagogical competence, have all been highlighted as internal practices which drive school improvement.

### The principal’s instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The headteacher’s instructional leadership practices are not clearly indicated within the school minutes book (Act 9/October 2010, Act 38/January 2011),

although it does highlight AD's role in allocating teaching hours, evaluating student results and his suggestion on teachers' modelling. Certain policy documents (Educational Law 1566/85 and the 1340/2002 Ministerial Decision) show that the principal's pedagogical-oriented role is encouraged.

### *Findings from interviews*

Overseeing learning and teaching is the headteacher's priority within the school, although he is largely involved in managerial responsibilities. AD reveals that:

I don't have the time, which I would like to devote to instructional leadership activities, while administrative responsibilities remain crucial in headteachers' school life, as we are not provided with a school secretary.

Other staff (DD, DD3 and CD1) agree that AD's obstacle in dealing with pedagogical responsibilities lies in the heavy burden of managerial tasks. BD's comment that:

the head is everything, the management and pedagogical head; the person who deals mainly with bureaucratic issues, but at the same time, he tries to find the balance of handling teaching and learning effectively, with sensitivity and care,

reinforces the the multi-dimensional role of the head's role. The majority of teachers (CD2, CD3, CD4, CD5, DD1, DD2) agree with CD who says that 'AD devotes much of his time even in activities which ensure the improvement of teachers' pedagogical dimensions, although I don't think he is obliged to do that by the law.' DD1 shows how AD oversees teaching and learning.

AD constantly assures the quality of teaching and learning activities by ensuring that nobody deviates from a learning-centred lesson. When needed, he helps us to activate practices that affect students' learning, either through giving his consent to modify aspects of the curriculum,

unofficially, or through creating the space to make us help students individually.

### *Observation findings*

There was no evidence of the headteacher's instructional leadership practices during the researcher's observations.

### *Overview*

AD's indirect involvement in activities related to pedagogic-leadership shed light on the limited extent of leadership dimensions within Greek school management. The instructional leadership practices, that AD is 'semi-actively' involved in, highlight a leading strategic-instructional role through a clear vision, allocation of curriculum subjects, music curriculum design, monitoring students' progress, along with a non-leading pedagogical role which enhances teachers' encouragement for peer-coaching, modelling within and across the schools in the district, and ensuring CPD provision, with the purpose of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

### Deputy head's instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

The internal documents provide no insights into the deputy head's (BD) instructional leadership role.

### *Findings from interviews*

Among the research participants, only CD5 stated that the deputy head is involved in IL activities, whereas there is an agreement among CD, DD and DD2 that BD is not directly involved in pedagogical responsibilities, unless the head is absent. This contrasts with the deputy head's (BD) own view who perceives that her instructional role is strongly concerned with setting the framework for collaborative teachers' learning and ensuring that newly appointed staff strengthen their teaching and learning approaches:

Although a deputy head's responsibilities are not clearly defined, my role is both administrative and pedagogical, as I'm responsible, for example, for co-ordinating students' voice, developing the environment for enhancing teaching and learning within teachers' community, guide young teachers, etc.

### *Observation findings*

No deputy head's instructional leadership activities were observed.

### *Overview*

Deputy heads' official responsibilities do not include instructional leadership practices. However, BD perceives that she does have an IL role, in contrast to the other respondents, who deny that deputy heads have an instructional role within a Greek school.

### Subject advisers' instructional leadership role

### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

Scrutinising policy and subject advisers' documents sheds light on the subject advisers' (FC and FD) involvement in IL practices (see chapter six). The headteacher's annual report is the only internal document which highlights FC and FD's contribution to learning and teaching development in school D, through organizing training seminars for teachers in their subject areas and modelling good teaching practices for them.

### *Findings from interviews*

Most participants did not embrace the role of the subject advisers positively. CD1 and DD1 refer to the theoretical role of the subject advisers as instructional leaders. CD1 says that 'in theory, we have the subject advisers, but in practice they are invisible'. The management team agrees with this view, but AD also adds that 'subject advisers rarely visit schools in order to provide pedagogical advice to teachers, as they have many schools within their responsibility. However, they organise training meetings for the subject teachers.' BD expands by offering a critical stance:

In contrast to my own experience that I've never seen my subject adviser, FD and the subject adviser for Music sometimes visit our school. Although the educational law implies collaboration between the headteacher and the subject adviser, the only relationship that we have with most of them is when we receive New Year's Eve emails, and some emails during the year, which are not of great importance, though.

There is a significant discrepancy between school D's respondents and the subject advisers' views on their role. Modelling good teaching practices and organizing teachers' training, constitute the only two agreed practices that are used by subject advisers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Both FC and FD highlight the main restriction prohibiting them from utilising a

coaching dimension as part of their official role, although it is implied by the law. FC points out that:

based on the pedagogical responsibilities that subject advisers have, theoretically, they could have led school improvement to a certain extent through coaching staff, if they had a closer relationship and co-operation with the teachers.

Modelling teaching practices is one of the strategies used by the subject advisers who are responsible for teaching and learning within a Greek school context. FD highlights that:

I model good teaching practices to teachers with the purpose of modeling teaching strategies and positive interactions with students. My main goal is leading teachers to learn something that will be beneficial in their teaching practices in order to make students learn. I make them clear that whatever we do must be driven by our passion to have more effective classes. This is our reward, not the money.

Both subject advisers perceived their role within an advisory framework with the purpose of making better teachers through improving their teaching skills, fostering their subject knowledge, and enhancing their pedagogical management of the class, through providing them with CPD opportunities.

The subject advisers, responding to the question on the amount of time that they devote to instructional leadership activities, claimed that they cannot answer this in respect of each school, as FD and FC have to support 85 and 170 schools each, respectively, a major restriction on their ability to influence teaching and learning.

### *Observation findings*

The researcher was not able to observe the work of subject advisers.

### *Overview*

One of the subject advisers' official responsibilities (Educational Law 1304/82, 2525/97 and the Ministerial Decision 353.1/324/105657/Δ1/2002) is the development of a collaborative community with the purpose of fostering consistency of teaching practice within their subjects, curriculum guidance, monitoring teachers' performance, modeling teaching practices, and providing professional development opportunities for teachers. However, this appears to be a limited role in practice, according to school D's participants.

### Most experienced subject teachers' instructional leadership role

#### *Evidence from documentary analysis*

There is no evidence on this issue in school D's internal documents, or in the Educational Law or the subject advisers' documentary evidence.

#### *Findings from interviews*

There is general agreement that there is no distinctive instructional involvement for the most experienced teachers. CD and DD agree that there are no other official instructional responsibilities assigned to them, apart from their teaching commitments. CD says 'the fact that I'm the most experienced maths teacher in the school does not mean that I could be the maths leader. I'm not officially assigned to leading any pedagogical practices. However, I have a pedagogical collaboration with a colleague.' This is an informal leadership role undertaken by CD through his involvement in developing CD3's instructional practices within



Grade C pan-hellenic Maths pedagogy. DD's involvement in IL activities lies in the informal discussions that she is involved in with other philologists, but:

I don't lead the discussion as being the most experienced teacher, but we all share our views, as we are all in the same field and position level, just teachers. It may be a typical Greek characteristic that we do not like to be taught by external officials who are not, usually, fighters within schools. We know our needs best.

There is a strong consensus that all teachers are involved in various instructional activities. CD1 sheds light on teachers' instructional leadership dimension role:

We take initiatives to intervene in the curriculum when needed, we communicate well with our colleagues when dealing with the provision of extra teaching support, especially in cases of student's failure. We share effective pedagogy and resources a lot, we participate in professional practice discussions in which we try to find the interrelations of governmental initiatives and our school-based translation of reality. I do not think we are active pedagogists because we are an experimental school, but it seems that in general it is up to individual teachers. Now, due to our nature, we, sometimes model lessons outside the school and organize seminars for other schools with the purpose to open our classes to the whole school community in order to learn from each other.

### *Observation findings*

Senior teachers' involvement in IL activities was not evident during school D's shadowing days.

### *Overview*

Instructional leadership practices are adopted by teachers within the framework of participative leadership. Evaluating curriculum within a collaborative framework, managing students' progress, disseminating effective learning and teaching strategies through pedagogical discussions, unofficial peer-coaching and limited modelling, along with organising in-house professional development

opportunities mainly for music teachers, are all features of teachers' leadership for learning but these are not specific to senior teachers.

## **Overview of Case Study D**

What really distinguishes our school from other schools is our orientation to learning and the provision of a nice learning environment for all. Our major ingredient for success is the collaborative model. AD and myself (BD) choose whether we will be implementing the law only, or whether we will be both a law processor and school leaders. In this school we apply what the law says but we are also flexible to adapt it to fit our purpose. In order to influence the good reputation of our school, we have to go beyond translating the law in our context. (BD)

Improving teaching and learning is the major focus of the management team despite the challenges and restrictions of government policy. There are examples of IL through an indirect pathway –the headteacher working through and with others. The headteacher (AD) exerts an indirect but strong influence on teaching and learning, while participants' perceptions on the subject advisers were disparaging. The example of AD's unofficial involvement in practices, which are related to instructional leadership, could lead the researcher to redefine this headteacher's role within a highly centralized education system to allow for some discretion to influence instructional practices in the school. The increased participative engagement of subject teachers to practices beyond their official teaching, as an influential pathway to improve their professional practice and, in turn, students' learning, shows that leadership for learning is not limited only to senior teachers and/or leaders.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

Chapter eight provides the platform for a critical discussion of the four case study findings, exploring the links between the cross-case analysis, and the empirical English, Greek and prominent international literature. Providing an in-depth understanding about the existence or lack of leadership practices in diverse educational systems, the researcher adopted a unified thematic structure which has been consistently used in Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7, in order to achieve four outcomes:

- a) Comparing the two English case studies, linked mainly to the English literature.
- b) Comparing the two Greek case studies, linked mainly to the Greek literature.
- c) Comparing the English and Greek findings (linked to centralisation/decentralisation).
- d) Showing how the present research confirms or refutes previous international research on instructional leadership.

The author seeks to identify similarities and differences in HPSS leadership, where the effects of centralization/decentralization are evident. Joining elements of the macro (system policy) and micro (institutional) level structure, reflecting reciprocity in the leadership for learning practices with the interaction of the IL actors, dictate the structure for comparison which led to a grounded theory model, elaborated in chapter nine. A comparative approach, targeted at themes within

and across the countries, has been adopted in order to ‘unravel further the complex interplay of policies, structures, culture, values and pedagogy’ (Alexander, 2000: 4).

## **Cross-country Comparative Analysis**

This section provides a synthesis of the data and literature within a deeper comparison of the four case studies, within and between the two countries. This is achieved through discussion of the conceptualised seven IL dimensions in a comparative contextual field, while the integration of arguments related to the main means through which instructional leadership is linked to learning is influenced by the dynamics of people affecting leadership practices in contrasting educational contexts. Prominent researchers (e.g. Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Leithwood et al., 1999; Southworth, undated) stress the contextualized nature of leadership, implying its socially constructed nature. Given that ‘outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to the context in which it is exercised’ (Leithwood et al., 1999: 4), the following contextual factors are related to the organizational structure and policy, creating the platform for a variation in leadership for learning practices in the four case study schools:

- the school size,
- status- the Academy status for both English schools, along with the National Support School Status of school B and the experimental/pilot type of school D allow a greater discretion for autonomy in the teaching and learning process,
- the socio-economic background of students in school C,

- aspects of centralization and school autonomy, in terms of leaders' authority to go beyond the political directives and create unofficial mechanisms to maintain a strong focus on teaching and learning,
- the role of external actors, such as the Greek subject advisers,
- years of headship experience, and,
- the organisational structure, e.g. the extended leadership team in both English schools which accentuates the distribution of authority, for learning.

Certain structures appear to emerge across the systems, where policies for learning and teaching are approached differently. In addition, the vertical and hierarchical development of leadership in medium-sized schools in the centralised Greek system is highlighted in contrast to a pattern of vertical and horizontal distribution of leadership responsibilities in the devolved English system, which varied considerably regarding the extent of autonomy for schools and teachers. In contrast, McKinsey's (undated: 8) international survey shows that:

differences in what leaders do are not directly related to the level of autonomy they are given. Internationally, there is no relationship between the degree of autonomy enjoyed by a school principal and their relative focus on administrative or instructional leadership.

However, the degree of centralization and decentralization across the two systems strongly influences the contexts of the four case studies, in terms of system and organizational policy, especially in the nature of formal and informal school leaders' influence on teaching and learning practices, as shown in the next section.

## Vision for Learning

### *Comparing the two English schools*

Learning is at the centre of both schools, by ensuring that high aspirations are developed as key concepts (Earley et al., 2002) while an ethos of achieving students' full potential is built, through a variety of learning processes that are discussed below. Similarly to Krüger et al.'s (2007: 14) review, the English headteachers' leadership behaviour (instructional and strategic) seems to be substantially affected by the creation of a vision through sustaining a school culture that fosters learning by improving classroom performance and thus boosting achievement. Vision for learning has been an expectation for the English schools, arising from the White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997: 46):

The vision for learning set out in this White Paper will demand the highest qualities of leadership and management from headteachers. [...] Good heads can transform a school; poor heads can block progress and achievement.

Given the importance of school leadership within a high-performing context, both English schools have set out a clear, but not distinctive, vision for learning, captured within a school improvement dimension, which is highly dependent on the national view. In the same vein, headteachers in Bolam et al.'s (1993: 44) research project embodied a vision which 'reflect[ed] the broad aims of British education [influenced by 1986 and 1988 Education Reform Acts], e.g. to encourage every child to reach their full potential' while limited references were made to a 'genuinely inspiring vision'. Both researched schools illustrate a vision which boosts student' learning outcomes, targeted to creating a positive teaching

and learning environment. The indispensable interrelationship between leadership and learning is acknowledged in both English schools, which is deemed similar to centralised patterns set out in the White Paper. This sense of direction is exemplified within the following sub-themes:

- Results-focused vision
- 'Constrained collaborative' vision-building

#### *Results-focused vision*

Both English case study schools have set their own 'vision for learning' which implies that the targets, arising from the vision, are closely linked to results-focused learning. School A's participants agreed to the head's vision about 'making the platform for getting the very best results of each child', while school B ensures that every child achieves their full potential within a stimulating teaching and learning environment, with the purpose of achieving very good results, so that they can gain places at a University. This results orientation is driven by 'a highly developed national accountability framework' (Day et al., 2008: 8), where students' results are publicly available, accompanied by a national inspection regime.

#### *'Constrained collaborative' vision-building*

The extent to which priorities are top-down, or collaborative, is debatable, as there appears to be restricted involvement in vision building, compromising a genuinely collaborative vision for learning. While senior leaders' strategic vision remains predominant, as 'agents' of government policies without 'a parochial vision' (Bottery, 2007: 95), a horizontal distribution of practices allows teachers'

involvement in departmental decisions, as long as these are aligned with the school vision. This is similar to Day et al.'s (2007b) study in English schools and Finnish secondary schools (Ngaajieh Nnane, 2009). The notion of a 'constrained collaborative vision building' enhanced in both researched English schools, under the umbrella of middle leaders and subject teachers' interaction through the departmental improvement plans, is similar to the 'contrived collegiality' concept (Hargreaves, 1994), suggesting that collaboration is intended to have a predictable outcome (Hargreaves, 1994; Webb and Vulliamy, 1996; Brundrett, 1998).

The differences in the two English high performing secondary schools focus mainly on:

- Contextual differences
- Personalised learning

### *Contextual differences*

Significant contextual differences in the patterns of shaping and broadening the vision across schools in the same country, are the outcome of a relatively high degree of autonomy at school level, stressing the socially constructed nature of leadership (Leithwood et al., 1999; Southworth, undated). However, autonomy is subject to governance influence under the 'policy architecture within which [...] schools [work]' (Bottery, 2007: 95), constrained by national expectations with an uncritical policy mediation (Wright, 2001). The data from the two different types of English schools show that, within the results driven environment, the setting of the strategic vision of the school has been contextually bounded. As a faith



school, school A builds a Christian ethos to overlay the vision. School B is a National Support School with no religious affiliation, whose vision is creating an innovative learning environment for all stakeholders, where teachers' pedagogical growth and leadership development help to promote an outstanding school as a learning organisation.

### *Personalised learning*

This is a recurrent theme which also applies to other aspects of IL (e.g. personalization of curriculum; student progress/ intervention). However, the researcher decided to treat the issue in this section. Personalisation of curriculum and academic support is seen as an aspect of VfL in both schools with a subtle differentiation, as an outcome of a devolved English system with features of horizontal and vertical distribution which affects individual schools' qualifications for initiatives, tailoring the needs of individual learners to pedagogy and curriculum. This may be a weak feature at school A, as the deputy head appears to be unaware of personalized learning activities and his involvement, despite its inclusion in the SEF. In contrast, school B seems to be a more effective 'governmental sponge' as it absorbs NCSL's (2004c) policy, translating it into building schooling around individual student's needs through the creation of a personalised learning centre. However, it seems that the personalization agenda in the researched schools has been perceived similarly to Maguire et al.'s (2013: 329) study, where 'the approaches being enacted [...] constituted 'shallow' forms of personalisation- differentiation and tailoring the curriculum – rather than the more radical version [...].'

### *Comparing the two Greek schools*

The empirical study encapsulates the common thread between the two Greek schools, as shown below:

- Absence of vision statements
- Results-driven vision
- A focus on enjoying learning

These similarities are linked to the centralisation of the Greek education system.

#### *Absence of vision statements*

Within the centralized Greek context, it is not easy for schools to develop distinctive visions for learning, while formal vision building is also absent from government policy documents. A consequence of a predetermined government educational policy is a vision which is implemented by the school staff, without having any participation in its formulation. The lack of formal vision statements may be a reason for subtle variations between the two schools, as they interpreted central requirements differently, despite the centralization. Another important theme is the limited role of the head and the external advisers in developing school-focused and subject-specific visions, respectively.

Hofstede's (1984) concept of 'power distance' appears to be relevant to the Greek schools as there is a big distance between the central government's bureaucratic structure and the headteacher, while the distance from teachers is also high, illustrating the limited scope for school capacity building. The finding that heads

attempting to be ‘bureaucratically’ correct, by including government goals within school targets, confirms Konidari and Abernot’s (2006) research in Greek secondary schools, showing a lack of shared vision between the educational partners, and lack of communication from the base to the top of the hierarchical pyramid.

The two dimensions discussed below illustrate the informal nature of VfL in the Greek schools.

#### *Results-driven vision*

In a results’ oriented educational system, where rote learning is preferred to creativity, the focus on an exam driven vision seems to be inevitable. This results-targeted secondary system may explain the narrow emphasis on a vision which allows space for developing transferrable skills and ‘a complete 21<sup>st</sup> century citizen’ (DD2) while limiting the scope for developing a wider approach to education, as modules such as citizenship, drama, and skills development, are marginalized.

#### *A focus on enjoying learning*

Participants in both schools stress the importance of students enjoying their learning within a school system which does not create a stimulating learning and teaching platform, due to the limitations of an exam-oriented framework. This view is also shared by the Greek philology adviser (FD) who stresses her goal of ‘striving to make students love subjects which are not respected by students in a utilitarian era’ where the drive to rote learning, linked to national exams, is

predominant. This notion contrasts with Norway, where an enthusiastic and enjoyable approach to learning remains at the heart of its vision (Møller, 2009).

The cross-case analysis of the Greek schools shows two main differences:

- Vision implementation
- Personalization

#### *Vision implementation*

The school context affects stakeholders' involvement in vision implementation. The different approaches are related to the lack of an official vision statement, the limitations of leadership in improving the quality of learning at school level, as well as leaders' different practices to reconcile the demands of the centralized system with the school context. The overwhelming emphasis on a results-driven approach leaves little room for teaching innovation in school C, but there is more room for experimentation in a model school (school D). These subtle differences may be explained by Bagakis' (2007a: 164) point that '[t]he [Greek] schools usually do not have targets to meet and they do not have substantial pedagogical discussions. It is often evident that the 'letter of the law' is [the main] schools' [...] priority [...].'

#### *Personalisation*

Whilst the development of personalised student learning is concerned to be the aspiration of both schools, variations in implementation were observed. This partly reflects the impact of the financial limitations of a costly policy to manage students' learning beyond the rational school timetable. In essence, school D

shows greater scope for personalization due to teachers' flexibility to focus on students' learning within a model school, in contrast to school C's more limited personalised approach within a more conventional setting.

### *Cross-country comparisons*

England and Greece provide two contrasting education settings. The former has a high degree of self-management, with substantial scope for proactive leadership of learning, albeit within a tightly defined national curriculum, policed by the Ofsted inspection regime. Greece has a highly centralised system, leaving only limited aspects for school-level decision-making. Despite these differences, similarities are evident in respect of:

- The results-driven focus
- An emphasis on personalised learning in 'Teaching Schools'

### *The results-driven focus*

Despite the differences between the two systems, notably in respect of the degree of centralization, there is a convergence of findings across the four case study schools in respect of the results-driven focus. This is perhaps an inevitable outcome of both the Greek and English systems, with top-down policy-making, and a strong inspection regime, respectively. This may arise also because students' exam results are a crucial factor for measuring schools' effectiveness and in maintaining accountability to the central authorities, as also noted in the literature (e.g. Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2006a).

### *An emphasis on personalised learning in 'Teaching Schools'*

As noted earlier, a common theme in both countries schools' vision for learning within high performing contexts is a drive towards personalised teaching and learning, which is also related to curriculum, as explored in the next section.

There are, however, two main differences between the English and Greek schools:

- External influence on the vision
- Shared vision-building

#### *External influence on the vision*

In contrast to the English schools, where the vision for learning has been an official expectation as described in the White Paper, this is not perceived to be the case in the Greek context, despite its centralized nature. In both countries, however, there is a hierarchical element to vision setting with external bodies strongly influencing the results-oriented focus. Despite the strong centralisation of the Greek system, the external dynamics developed for influencing the vision are weaker than in the English system, and the Greek external subject advisers' role is to provide support rather than being a decisive influence on the pedagogical vision.

#### *Shared vision-building*

The degree to which vision-building is shared differs and there is greater evidence of collaborative vision building in the English secondary schools in

comparison to the top down approach in the more centralised setting of Greece. The problematic nature of agreeing on an official school-based vision, within the Greek context, seems to emanate from the absence of a systematic monitoring of students' needs, the insufficient involvement of the teachers in the process and the predominant role of Greek headteachers in cascading the government vision to the teaching staff. Demertzi et al.'s (2009: 305) study confirms the limited and individual headteacher's initiative to create a vision 'that will challenge stagnation'. The spirit of the hierarchical direction of vision, with elements of shared ownership, as evident in the decentralized and devolved English model, seems to be closer to the Norwegian case (Møller, 2009) than the Greek one, while the devolution of power seems to be under the umbrella of building consensus and collaboration in developing the vision (ibid: 262)

### Curriculum Management

#### *Comparing the two English schools*

A significant common feature of curriculum management across the two schools can be conceptualised as *hierarchical distribution*.

Curriculum management is both a hierarchical and a distributed activity, illustrated by school A's SEF reference to 'a distributive leadership style within a highly focused, experienced Leadership Team'. Demonstrating a high level of departmental curriculum leadership within the policy constraints of the SLT regarding curriculum, is strongly agreed in both English schools, while the researched middle leaders played a pivot role in reviewing and deconstructing the departmental curriculum with SLT guidelines and policy. In school A, the

head of English (DA) worked as a school improvement leader who takes account of government policy but does not ‘jump’ in response to government imperatives, while in school B this practice is a shared responsibility within the faculty. Cooperative curriculum planning empowers teachers to develop their professionalism to lead change, as in Finnish schools (Webb et al., 2004; Sahlberg, 2007). Despite the centralised National Curriculum, the two English high-performing schools have moved towards developing more decentralised strategies towards a personalised learning curriculum development, encouraged by the 2010 White Paper (DfE, 2010).

Curriculum management is a constant collective monitoring activity assessed by the leadership teams. All researched subject teachers in both schools are involved in departmental curriculum planning and management and there is a strong sense of teamwork in curriculum development (e.g. curriculum content, resources, and curriculum delivery). Heck et al.’s (1990; 1991) studies showed that leaders in high-performing schools are directly involved in co-ordinating the curriculum, while Day et al.’s (2007b: 65) English study showed ‘highly effective/ improved high disadvantage secondary school’ heads’ focused support on ‘teaching approaches and learning practices within the school; adapting the curriculum; extending extra curricula provision [...]’. Similarly, Stoll et al. (2002: 463) stress that ‘curriculum interventions [are] aimed at raising students’ achievement [...]’.

### *Personalisation of curriculum*

A personalised curriculum orientation has been reiterated in both schools as an element of VfL. Common embedded features of classroom practice (e.g.



Accelerated Learning and Assessment for Learning) across the two researched English schools is similar to Macfarlane and Woods' (2011) pupil-led approach to learning in their outstanding schools.

### *Comparing the two Greek schools*

In the highly centralised Greek context, high levels of similarity were found across the two schools, particularly evident in two dimensions:

- Centralised management of teaching and learning
- Internal and external roles

### *Centralised management of teaching and learning*

Centralization is a significant feature of curriculum design, planning and organisation in Greece. The teacher's role is primarily one of execution with very limited influence on curriculum. 'In the pan-hellenic exam modules, teachers cannot do anything else but teach what we are given to teach. Teaching final year students is like teaching a parrot to speak.' (CD5) This finding is consistent with international studies, such as Printy (2008) and Webb et al. (2004), where the curriculum is mainly driven by central governmental standards.

Curriculum modifications are not acceptable, as 'the PI monitors that we follow Grade C teaching syllabus, by the book, as students are examined at a national level in the PI's national curriculum.'(DD1) In practice, however, teachers may make limited unofficial deviations from the highly structured curriculum 'with the tacit agreement of the head' (CA), 'in order to make it more appropriate for

the demanding nature of the exams.’ (DB) In the same vein, Demertzi and Bagakis’s (2006: 140) Greek study showed that ‘there is some collaboration among the staff concerning teaching design’ but a limited room ‘for stretching the national curriculum framework.’ (ibid: 144)

### *Internal and external roles*

Curriculum management is centrally directed by the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute (PI) while schools have limited scope to shape curriculum decision-making. Within both Greek schools, the heads and deputy heads’ role are very limited in the overall management of the curriculum, adopting mainly administrative and ‘curriculum processor’ roles, based on the PI structured specifications in the core national examination subjects. Externally, the role of the subject advisers (FC, FD) is mainly strategic, deciding ‘the what and how’ of curriculum implementation in accordance with the PI guidelines, for example through organising pedagogical seminars to maximize teachers’ effectiveness. However, even in cases of under-performance, the subject advisers’ pedagogical involvement is constrained by law because ‘the law does not allow me to enter classes’ (FC). This was confirmed by school leaders and teachers, leading one teacher (CD) to say that subject advisers have ‘disappeared’.

Despite the centralized aspects of curriculum management, there are two main differences between the Greek schools:

- Curriculum development in the specialist school
- Monitoring curriculum effectiveness

### *Curriculum development in the specialist school*

Despite the top-down and structured curriculum framework, a more decentralised curriculum management is a distinctive characteristic in school D (the model school). The headteacher (AD) stressed the school's role in developing the curriculum for some modules in Music education, setting the curriculum framework for common examinations, guiding other Musical schools. This is partly because there are no PI specifications in Music. In contrast, school C, as a state comprehensive secondary school, is unable to develop the curriculum in this way.

### *Monitoring curriculum effectiveness*

Monitoring the effectiveness of curriculum is a top down activity in school D where the head's role is crucial in intervening in the class curriculum management in respect of non-core pan-hellenic subjects, in collaboration with subject advisers. However, in the more conventional and typical school C, the system offers very limited scope for the head's pedagogical involvement. Despite the official conceptualization of headteachers as curriculum leaders, the central government restricts senior leaders' ability to align the curriculum to contextual (school) needs. This is seen as a bounded role as governmental policy implementator, rather than a curriculum leader collaborating with other schools and guiding intervention in teaching design. (Saliaris, 2009)

### *Cross-country comparisons*

A prominent example of similarity between the English and Greek case studies is the hierarchical engagement in curriculum development as a corollary of the tightly prescribed national curriculum in both contexts. While both countries operate a national curriculum, there is more scope for English school leaders, especially in high performing schools, to modify it to meet the specific needs of their students. High performing school principals in the two English schools empowered their instructional teams (teachers within departments) to create viable curriculum approaches to school improvement through influencing instruction for personalized learning. In Greece, however, teachers' empowerment mainly lies within a tightly constrained synergy of collaborative groups 'sometimes in collaboration with other teachers at the same grade level.' (Printy, 2008: 198) This echoes Spillane et al.'s (2003: 536) findings where 'leadership for instruction involved multiple people, those in formal leadership positions and those who took on informal leadership responsibilities.'

### Evaluation of student results

#### *Comparing the two English schools*

The two English schools adopt two similar strategies in evaluating student learning:

- Shared ownership in monitoring student outcomes
- Strategic approach to intervention

### *Shared ownership in monitoring student outcomes*

Whilst findings from the international literature confirm the importance of this dimension in high performing schools (Heck, 2000; Macfarlane and Woods, 2011; Ofsted, 2009; Murphy et al., 2007), leaders' impact on student outcomes is indirect (Day et al. 2007b; Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Hallinger and Heck, 2010a; 2011). Monitoring student performance against students' personalized target setting has been the priority for both English school leaders through a 'matrix' monitoring system, which is perceived as 'the foundation for an ongoing, systematic dialogue about performance data, analysis, and actions for improvement [...]' (Pont et al., 2008: 131) Within a similar context, leaders of both case study schools developed the relationship between leadership and learning through a systematic monitoring pathway to create the conditions for consistent and robust reviewing of students' results. Similar to earlier research in England (Day et al., 2007b; Pont et al., 2008; Ofsted, 2009; Macfarlane and Woods, 2011), school leaders encouraged teachers to use performance data as a lever to 'personalise the learning experience of students' (Day et al., 2008: 10) and influence teachers' instruction for improving outcomes.

### *Strategic approach to intervention*

Another strong common feature is the schools' intervention with student groups to provide specialist input to match their needs. Intervention is an important tool for overcoming barriers to learning with the purpose of 'ensur[ing] maximum achievement.' (Macfarlane and Woods, 2011: 137) The provision of intervention

practices (e.g. extra curricular and tuition revision support, one-to-one tuition for KS3 students in English and Maths, a range of curriculum choices for personalized timetables) in both researched English schools, match other evidence from outstanding schools in England (Ofsted, 2009; Macfarlane and Woods, 2011).

There are two main differences between the two English high-performing schools:

- Assessment for Learning approach
- Learning inclusion

#### *Assessment for Learning approach*

All school B teachers were involved in improving pupils' achievement, through an Assessment for Learning<sup>32</sup> approach, whereas school A did not consistently maintain the momentum of implementation. The clear whole-school vision of teaching, learning and assessment set the framework for school B's high expectations of students and an agreed drive towards consistency in teaching, in contrast to the less established AfL approach in school A (except the English and Mathematics curriculum), where the links between pupils' needs and prior learning in order to impact on pupils' achievement was not a strong feature.

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<sup>32</sup>Assessment for Learning approach through identifying and explaining objectives, questioning, reviewing learning effectively during lessons and matching work planning to what students had learnt, systematic reviewing pupils' progress, following procedures for monitoring performance to ensure the learning approaches would be embedded effectively.

### *Learning inclusion*

Despite the commonality between the two English schools to identify official and structured ways of support for under-achieving students, the differentiation lies in the distinctive nature of intervention strategies adopted and the extent of implementation, due to the high level of decentralised support. In addition to the series of intervention strategies discussed earlier in this section, school B's distinctive creation of a Learning Inclusion Centre is a striking example of ensuring targeted specific students reach their potential within a learning zone space. Macfarlane and Woods (2011: 155) pinpoint the importance of a learning space for vulnerable students, resulting in 'a significant impact on the educational outcomes of many students [.]'

### *Comparing the two Greek schools*

Aspects of a strong centralised system are significant in the three similarities identified in the Greek schools:

- Periodic students' evaluation
- Internal and external roles
- School's unofficial supportive mechanism for improving students' learning

### *Periodic students' evaluation*

Evaluating students' results is the responsibility of teachers whereas the senior members of Greek schools are entitled to participate in the assessment of class

performance at the termly pedagogical meetings of the schoolteachers' council. Individual students' tracking of progress is not widely discussed between the school head and the teachers, although there is a formal expectation from senior school members for teachers to monitor student progress.

#### *Internal and external roles*

Both heads had a picture of students' summative assessment through the Nestoras computer database, while monitoring their progress is not widely supported. In contrast to school C, where there is limited engagement with monitoring student academic progress, school D has introduced Year group meetings, class meetings, subject teachers' meetings and teachers' dialogue about strategies for improving academic development. Subject advisers are not systematically involved in advising teachers about enhancing individual student progress, due to teachers' reluctance to have a pedagogical dialogue, in terms of overcoming barriers to students learning, as well as subject advisers' invisibility in schools.

#### *School's unofficial supportive mechanism for improving students' learning*

The lack of formal school strategies for additional academic support is linked to the absence of after-school supportive tutorials, provided by the Ministry of Education (until 2009), due to the financial cuts from the central authority. Despite this problem, some teachers in both Greek schools still invest additional time on teaching and learning. This occurs during their administrative allocated time, which has been perceived as a 'secret' common practice in state schools



(e.g. take the student out of the PE, English or RE classes to have an extra session with a teacher of a core module).

A subtle difference between the two Greek schools has emerged, focusing on the dimension of:

- *Informal personalization of intervention in the pan-hellenic modules*

Personalization lies in individual (student-based) and collective (the whole class is offered extra support in core panhellenic modules) unofficial support. School D shows a higher level of personalization while teachers have more flexibility, as a consequence of their reduced instruction-time in this model school. A distinctive characteristic of school D is ‘the passion to offer extra individualised support in the national examined modules’ (DD1).

### *Cross-country comparisons*

The claim that English school leaders in HPSS are systematically monitoring student results, and providing personalized intervention, springs from this research and confirms Ofsted’s (2009) review of outstanding schools. Given that reviewing students’ progress is an overwhelmingly teacher-centred role in Greece, it is unsurprising to view teachers as a more direct force for school improvement, as teacher leaders. Other differences include the nature of monitoring and the intervention strategies employed. As the dynamic of collaborative practices is entrenched in English HPSS, monitoring achievement has been conceived as a widely distributed activity where school actors, at

different levels, examine learners' outcomes and develop effective teams to create follow up intervention devices.

Another issue of differentiation is encapsulated in the strategies that schools devise with the purpose of establishing learning-centred improvement targets. The English school leaders' strategic approach in intervention contrasts with the absence of any official Greek mechanism to develop school-context based strategies. The era of high accountability in English schools may have led them to develop a systematic context-based strategic approach to address student underperformance. In contrast, snapshot mechanisms, characterised by sporadic and inconsistent practices, are evident in Greece, due to the lack of official support mechanisms for students, mainly due to opposition from the Teachers' Union.

### Monitoring teachers' performance

#### *Comparing the English schools*

Among the common practices in the English schools, are:

- Judgemental monitoring of teachers' performance
- Developmental observations
- Middle leaders' role

#### *Judgemental monitoring of teachers' performance*

Judgemental monitoring of teachers' performance is a line management process, as a means of evaluating the department and developing group dynamics in

enhancing areas for improvement, as Earley et al.'s (2002) study in a large English secondary school confirms. Both English school heads have delegated the officially rigorous monitoring of teachers' performance to the leadership group (senior and faculty leaders), with the purpose of investing in additional support in case of under-performance, as is also evident in Ofsted's (2009) outstanding schools research. Leaders' responsibility is to ensure that they exercise leadership which enhances learning through boosting teachers' performance (Blase and Blase, 2004), developing support strategies for teachers' instructional development and negotiating departmental targets with subject leaders for all learners. This approach is similar to that outlined in Ofsted's (2009) study of outstanding schools.

#### *Developmental observations*

Creating opportunities for insightful and productive dialogues about teaching and learning is an inevitable corollary of both judgemental (performance management) and developmental observations of teaching. Both English schools provide a platform for informal professional discussions about instruction and enhancing a learning ethos. This links to Southworth's (2003: 10) point about the importance of professional dialogue which is 'influential in shaping classroom practice [...].' Similar evidence from the LfL project (MacBeath et al., 2009; Swaffield, 2008a) suggests that dialogue as a critical friendship discourse was instrumental in enhancing professional learning.

### *Middle leaders' role*

The fundamental role of middle leaders in rigorously monitoring their staff to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is in line with Macfarlane and Woods' (2011: 133) study in outstanding schools, which highlighted '[...] the personalisation of [teachers'] professional development.' In contrast to NCSL's (2003a: 3) research review, where middle leaders 'show great resistance to the idea of monitoring the quality of their colleagues' work, especially by observing them in the classroom [,while considering it] as an abrogation of trust', both researched schools' subject leaders played a significant role in influencing pedagogical change based on observation evidence. The supportive role of middle managers, as important contributors to staff capacity building and facilitators of teachers' learning to impact in classrooms, similarly emerged in Rhodes and Houghton-Hill's (2000) and Harris and Lambert's (2003) studies, while an in-house staff collaborative culture was also favoured by the majority of Ofsted's (2009) outstanding schools, to help in sustaining excellence practice.

Within-country differences have emerged, indicating an emphasis on individual school initiatives for improving teaching and learning, such as:

- Learning Walks
- Informal 'drop-in'
- Teachers' underperformance strategies

### *Learning Walks*

A distinctive approach in school B is the leadership team's regular Learning Walks- standardized on a particular focus each time (e.g. effective questioning, marking for improvement)- which are intended to assure teaching quality since 2009, while measuring the progression towards 'outstanding', against Ofsted criteria. Similarly to Pont et al.'s (2008) study, an issue that has emerged in relation to the Learning Walks is the notion of the 'open door' policy, which enhances instructional sharing while enabling staff interactions to maximize learning (Spillane et al., 2009). In contrast, school A monitors the quality of learning, through 'drop-ins', as discussed below. The sense of differentiation is articulated in a contextually bounded framework. School B is perceived to be a 'Learning School', while working as co-constructors of learning within a reflective practice framework, intended to deepen stakeholders' intensive discussion about learning in Ofsted's criteria.

### *Informal 'drop-in'*

In contrast to school B's Learning Walks, observations in school A are short and unstructured. However, DA1's point about having been observed by the headteacher without feedback, raises questions about the effectiveness of the head's 'drop ins' which are in place 'to inform their monitoring of the quality of learning.'

(<http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/MemberSupport/NASUWTPublications/LessonObservation/index.htm>) School A participants expressed concerns about the hidden

nature of this observation process, exacerbated by the school's tendency to use Ofsted as a justification.

### *Teachers' underperformance strategies*

In case of under-performance, the school B leadership team activates a high level of support for sharing good practice with the purpose of ensuring good or outstanding teaching. As shown later in this chapter, school B is identified as a learning school which creates the framework for developing teachers' instructional practices, whereas school A showed a preference for external support agencies to improve teaching as well as in-house mentoring.

### *Comparing the Greek schools*

The Greek schools are similar in two respects, revealing the complexities of policy enactment:

- Inactive implementation of the law
- Informal evaluation of teachers' performance

### *Inactive implementation of the law*

Given that teachers' performance evaluation policy (e.g. Educational Law 2525/97) is not mandated by the educational bureaucrats, it creates a platform for giving rise to controversies due to its elasticity in enactment, while its pattern is problematic.

In Greece, the possible existence of observations to evaluate teachers' performance would have given rise to a storm of protest and there would be a general outcry from OLME's<sup>33</sup> side. (CD)

Participants in both schools highlighted their fear of evaluation, regarding it as the most 'authoritarian model of inspectorship' (Katsikas and Kavvadias, 1998: 107) and a threat (Mavrogiorgos, 2003) with possible dismissal, in case of under-performance. Teachers' evaluation is inactive because attempts at evaluation by the school subject advisers leads to refusal/resistance from the teachers' trade union. The Union's negative attitude to evaluation confirms earlier Greek literature (e.g. Papakonstantinou, 1993; Christodoulou, 2007; Saliaris, 2009) which show that there is no trust to the people who are in the position to monitor teachers' performance' due to a lack of training, along with the concerns about the evaluators competence (skills and subject knowledge).

#### *Informal evaluation of teachers' performance*

Since there is a limited official accountability in the Greek state schools, formal evaluation is enacted by the subject advisers and headteachers, only in case of serious formal complaints about a teacher's pedagogical ineffectiveness. However, the allocation of teachers to courses and classes, especially examination groups, is preceded by informal evaluation of teachers' performance, so that the more effective teachers are allocated to the more difficult classes.

The only significant difference between the two Greek schools is the nature of *intervention*.

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<sup>33</sup> OLME: Greek Federation of State School Teachers of Secondary Education

In case of under-performance, school D has activated its own mechanisms of one-to-one in-house coaching of pedagogical-oriented strategies, as a distinctive feature of this model school. In contrast, school C appears to be ineffective in evaluating its teachers, indicating the ‘amateur’ nature of the teaching profession which seems to be immune from evaluation.

### *Cross-country comparisons*

The data from the English schools, that monitoring classroom teaching contributes to school improvement, supports Robinson et al.’s (2008) study showing that leaders’ direct involvement in evaluation helps to improve teaching programmes. However, the Greek Teachers’ Union opposes evaluation, referring to it as a threat (e.g. dismissal or financial reduction). The contrasting perceptions of monitoring across the two countries, conceptualised as ‘the key cornerstone of what you do’ (BB) and ‘an authoritative threat to teachers’ work’ (DD5), explains the cross-country differences, such as:

- the nature of monitoring;
- leaders’ direct/ indirect involvement, and,
- teachers’ under-performance strategies.

### Mentoring and Coaching

In an era of increased accountability in many educational systems (e.g. English), both mentoring and coaching ‘serve as catalysts to transform the school more



quickly' (Wise and Jacobo, 2010: 160) as they are perceived to offer intervention opportunities for school improvement.

### *Comparing the English schools*

The main similarity between the two English schools is distributed peer coaching:

#### *Distributed peer coaching*

Coaching has been conceived as a delegated pedagogical method for the improvement of learning, implemented by senior, middle and subject teachers in both schools. Building a collaborative culture of teaching as a 'teachers' development model' (Blase and Blase, 2004), has been one of the main priorities for both schools. The essential point is the instrumental role of leaders in the creation of teachers' communities of practice in which members benefit from participation in learning opportunities, as also reiterated in Printy's (2008) findings.

A subtle difference between the English schools is the nature of professional dialogue (i. hierarchical mentoring, ii. peer-coaching).

#### *Hierarchical mentoring*

Mentoring in school A is hierarchical in that the deputy head mentors middle leaders while middle leaders mentor teachers in their departments. However, school A's focus is on deputy head's (AB) mentoring role which has an

additional significance as this practice enactment relates to under-performing teachers. The tendency to offer guidance for pedagogical change is related to his outstanding performance as a teacher. The significance of AB's practice may be explained by the limited literature on deputy headship in secondary education in respect of mentoring teachers' instructional competence.

### *Peer-coaching*

As a National Support School, B has created a strong mechanism for developing good or outstanding classroom practice, using a reflective instructional dialogue (Marks and Louis, 1997; Simkins et al., 2006; Nehring et al., 2010). This is intended to establish a shared background of mutual learning, which could be addressed a 'learning-centred talk' (MacBeath and Townsend, 2011: 9). This distinctive and extensive coaching practice strongly indicates the notion of teacher leadership (Frost and Durrant, 2004; Muijs and Harris, 2007) enhanced through building the capacity of schools 'as a way to maximize the potential for such collaborative professional learning.' (Frost, 2012: 209)

There was evidence of coaching only in school B, with two distinct approaches:

- Coaching for Leadership
- Coaching for Learning

### *Coaching for Leadership*

Coaching for Leadership is a distinctive element in school B, while inspiring and developing aspirant leaders' posts are tailored to increase teachers' aptitude for

leadership. The leadership developmental coaching enacted in this leadership specialist school has been considered an effective way of managing internal talent retention through a ‘peer-networking interaction’ (Rhodes et al., 2004: 25) for organizational and individual leadership learning capability (ibid: 75). The importance of practicing coaching to support aspirant leaders’ career transition is similarly highlighted in Rhodes and Fletcher’s (2013: 53) framework for on-going professional development, through ‘[...] coaching [which] has the potential to raise awareness of self-efficacy and to enable rehearsal of situations [...]’. The increasing engagement of teachers to leadership capacity within school B supports Rhodes and Brundrett’s (2009b) and Rhodes et al. (2008) argument about the essential growing of the leadership talent pool within schools as a strategy for leadership succession planning. Additionally, the NSS status of school B has led to professional development days for external deputies, linked to the notion of system change (Higham and Hopkins, 2010; Pont et al., 2008; Gold et al., 2003) and of networks as participatory interventions (Townsend, A.J.<sup>34</sup>, 2010).

### *Coaching for Learning*

Formal peer coaching for learning is highlighted in school B, in which teachers’ professional and pedagogical ‘know-how’ emanates from teachers’ participation in systematic ‘reflective practice’ (Atkins and Murphy, 1993; Rhodes et al., 2004) activity. In addition, school B has a well-established tradition for developing colleagues in challenging schools, through sharing experience,

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<sup>34</sup> The first name initials of Townsend are used here, as there is another author cited in this thesis, named Townsend Tony (see Townsend and MacBeath, 2011).

resources and good practices. The impact of coaching is in line with NCSL's (2011: 3) researched schools, where collegiality increased pedagogical support across subject areas, created a non-threatening observation culture and 'improved pupil outcome measures'.

### *Comparing the Greek schools*

Within a centralized education system, there are no discernible differences between the two Greek schools and this is attributed to centralization, while a higher degree of similarity is experienced, as shown in the section below.

### *Senior leaders' limited role*

In Greek schools, there is no official mentoring or coaching for teachers. However, there are elements of informal mentoring for newly qualified teachers, for example by the deputy head (BD) of school D. In contrast, external subject advisers have a formal mentoring role for subject teachers but, in practice, they are rarely able to exercise it. This connects to Simkins et al.'s (2006: 332) comment, in respect of coaching for English middle leaders, that 'it looks like a paper exercise' by mentors who are 'not taking [their] role seriously'.

### *Informal peer professional discussions*

A pattern of coaching that the Greek subject advisers are officially expected to implement is 'technical coaching' (Garmston, 1987) through transferring new teaching skills and strategies to teachers. Such coaching

fits excellently into an educational system which is becoming ever more inclined to bureaucratic forms of control over its employees in order to secure

the implementation of centrally-determined, standardized forms of “effective” instruction (Darling-Hammond, 1985; McNeil, 1986). (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990: 234)

In addition, however, an informal culture of instructional improvement has been developed by all subject teachers in both Greek schools. Peer coaching is more evident in school D, where it is an informal strategy implemented by teachers to improve their teaching practices. Similarly, in the Leadership for Learning project, one of the Greek gymnasium schools created a culture of ‘sharing good practice amongst colleagues [as it] was seen as an important means to achieve [...] improvement.’ (Dempster and Bagakis, 2009: 93) However, in contrast to Biniari’s (2012) research finding that there is no collaborative culture of reflection leading to teachers’ learning in an Athens school, the current study consolidates the idea of informal professional dialogues linked to a trusting collegial relationship in the Greek schools.

### *Cross-country comparisons*

Mentoring and coaching are used differently in the two countries. While mentoring is mainly implemented for newly appointed teachers in Greece, there is a growing emphasis on informal peer-professional discussions, similar to the approach in four Finnish secondary schools, where peer-learning was encouraged (Ngaajieh Nnane, 2009). The limited role of the Greek senior leaders contrasts with the extensive involvement of leaders in official mentoring and coaching in the English schools. A growing emphasis on reflective practice and collaboration in English schools may be influenced by the accountability regime, while peer-coaching has been conceived as a mechanism to foster teachers’ professional performance. It is also important to note the emergence of coaching

for aspirant leadership development within English HPSS. Following Clutterbuck's (2001) dimensions of directive/ stretching - non-directive/ nurturing coaching process, and the formal/ informal dimension of Simkins et al.'s (2006) study, the present research suggests formal active coaching in school B, formal mentoring in school A, informal passive mentoring in school C and informal active mentoring in school D.

## Modelling

### *Comparing the English schools*

The cross-case analysis of the English schools illustrates two similarities in their practice of modelling:

- School leaders' role
- Departmental peer-sharing of good teaching practices

### *School leaders' role*

A commonality across the two English schools is the expectation that the SLT should lead by example, consistent with Ofsted's (2009) study of outstanding schools, while middle leaders model subject teaching. A striking example is school A's deputy head's and school B's head's high visibility to the staff which leads to modeling leadership practices, as an indirect way of influencing teachers. Ofsted (2003: 27) also highlight the importance of school leaders' visibility:

They cannot hide behind a closed door or seek refuge in paperwork, but need to be highly visible throughout the day, so that staff and pupils are reminded of the headteacher's expectations of them.

However, there was no reference to principals' modelling of good instruction across the two researched schools, in contrast to the emphasised example of principals' modeling teaching techniques in US settings (Blase and Blase, 1999b) at a period where IL was at the heart of leadership development programmes.

#### *Departmental peer-sharing of good teaching practices*

Sharing of good teaching practices has been embraced by school leaders and the teaching staff in both formal and informal ways. Although viewing lessons is limited, due to time constraints, a formal sharing of outstanding practice is held at departmental meetings, while a more informal sharing of good teaching practices is a common practice in school A. This connects with similarity with Macfarlane and Woods's (2010: 76) point about their outstanding schools in England, that a platform for 'ensuring best practice was shared across the school'.

The role of Advanced Skills Teachers' (ASTs) in leading CPD activities has been highlighted by Pedder et al.'s (2008) study in England. In school B, they contributed to teachers' understanding of an outstanding lesson through using modelling as a pivotal practice in disseminating professional development. Whilst showcasing an outstanding lesson, at an Inset event, ASTs triggered peer discussions among teachers about Ofsted's standards (DB3). This links to Southworth's (2005: 79) point that '[l]earning-centred leaders are role models to others because they are interested in learning, teaching and classrooms [...].' In contrast, there is no evidence of such practices in school A.

### *Comparing the Greek schools*

The common dimension of the researched Greek schools is the:

- Limited modelling opportunities of external and internal leaders
- Peer-sharing of effective teaching in subject-knowledge domain

#### *Limited modelling opportunities of external and internal leaders*

Greek subject advisers are expected to develop a collaborative community with the purpose of fostering consistency of subject teaching practice, through modelling teaching practices. However, teachers are often unwilling to attend modeling sessions organized by the subject advisers. FC, one of the researched subject advisers explains that most teachers' main concern is 'to do their job and then go home', while teachers relate it to the nature of these modeling sessions (not up-to-date material, unrealistic pedagogical teaching methods, non-interesting topics covered). The absence of school leaders' adoption of modelling opportunities is the outcome of their limited engagement with teaching. School D's headteacher (AD) convincingly argues that

since my time is 99% devoted to managerial issues, whereas one hour per week I do teaching, I wouldn't value my teaching as outstanding to show to my colleagues because I am high in the managerial hierarchy.

This evidence reinforces a widely accepted notion that Greek headteachers mainly focused on management, not on teaching and learning, and this does not empower them to model good practice.



*Peer-sharing of effective teaching in subject-knowledge domain*

Whilst both Greek schools have acknowledged the merits of their individual-taking initiative to create a platform for peer-sharing of effective teaching, aspects of reciprocal learning within their subjects domain is advocated in practice by a small number of teachers. The limited nature of this practice may be the outcome of an organisational system which does not support collaborative approaches.

In relation to the above, one difference between the two Greek schools relates to *the extent of teachers' unofficial modeling*.

Creating a climate for strengthening professional growth through modelling teaching has not been a panacea for Greek schools, due to 'the Greek mentality that no one teaches better than me' (AC). There is limited modelling in school C, mainly in the form of 'peer-sharing of what works well' (CC2), as mentioned above, but the very limited extent is explained by FC's argument that 'Greek teachers are not accustomed to open-door practices through which they improve their teaching skills, foster their subject knowledge and enhance their pedagogical management of the class'. Similarly, linking peer observation with the fear of colleagues' critique is expressed as a reason for hindering this practice in Biniari's (2012) study. In model school D, however, modelling is expected as a widely exercised practice within and across schools in the same educational prefecture. In school D, modelling takes the form of 'sharing effective pedagogical practices' within a friendly boundary framework where 'only the school colleagues who are well-disposed towards us, participate. But it is only

few of us who regularly create learning spaces within the school.’ (DD1) In contrast to Pashiardis and Savvides’ (2011) research in Cyprus, where model lessons have been designed for the weak teachers, model school D is open to the professional learning community of the district, without any sense of this being performance-driven.

### *Cross-country comparison*

Despite the unified role of leaders across systems, differences emerged which highlight the limited authority of Greek internal and external leaders in modeling teaching techniques in contrast to the more active role of English school leaders. However, an alternative to modelling is peer-sharing of good practices, which has been a common thread among the schools in the two contrasting systems. This links to notions of reciprocal learning, based on dialogue, engagement, and reflection upon teaching comprehension, within a peer-modelling process. There is a shift in the instructional teaching paradigm towards a more reciprocal learning experience. This argument reinforces Vygotsky’s (1978a) theory of learning which enhances the reciprocal experience for students and learners, while acting and interacting in shared experiences between teachers as instructors and teachers as learners.

### Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

#### *Comparing the English schools*

There are two main similarities between the two English schools in respect of CPD:

- External CPD provision
- In-house training

### *External CPD provision*

Participants in both schools highlighted the continued commitment of the leadership team to ensuring high-level training opportunities related to the schools' aims, the SEF, local and national requirements and individual needs for personal and professional development, at all levels. This is in line with Rhodes and Houghton-Hill's (2000: 427) secondary schools senior managers 'faith in professional development as a means to bring about required outcomes.' The notion of teachers' lifelong learning enhancing student achievement (e.g. Joyce and Showers, 2002; Sahlberg, 2007), is also evidenced in the researched schools, while stressing the value of courses run by the local authority, including the annual learning and teaching conference, in regard to practices of teaching, influenced by Ofsted's criteria for outstanding teaching. However, the value of the external CPD opportunities was debatable, in terms of the quality of the provision and the influence on teachers' professional learning. One striking example is school B's associate head's (AB) point that 'I wouldn't rush to send staff outside to many courses unless we are pretty convinced that they are going to be of value and highly connected to practice for outstanding teaching and learning. Many courses are better in our school.'

### *In-house training*

Investing in teaching and leadership skills development is central to performance management and school improvement. The in-service training needs process is effectively line managed in order to fulfill staff appraisal targets, which result in an improved learning experience for both teachers and pupils, as evidenced in the researched English schools. Teacher Days provide CPD opportunities that reflect the priorities set within the school improvement plan. In-house activities encapsulate a high level of peer-sharing experience, as noted in previous sections of this chapter. In school B, in-house training takes the form of ‘experiential learning’, similar to Zhang and Brundrett (2010) study in English schools.

In the light of the two English schools findings, it is not surprising that governmental policy initiatives have been translated differently in an autonomous system. There is a significant difference between the two English schools in that school A tends to prefer central formal courses while school B prioritises in-house provision, for promoting school-level capacity building. The latter supports the concept of professional learning community (PLC) for sustainable improvement, which has gained some currency in the same country context (Bolam et al., 2005).

### *In-house provision*

As a Leadership Specialist School, school B’s approach to in-house training provision is indicative of its enhanced role as a training school, as it also provides training for teachers from other schools. This is consistent with a

‘learning school’ (Southworth, 2003: 12) in which ‘teachers develop [...] and share their intellectual capital as widely as they can, inside and beyond the school’, similarly found in Earley et al.’s (2002) and Macfarlane and Woods’ (2011) studies. The notion of ‘learning in context’ (Fullan, 2005: 69) is developed in Chicago, while these similarities across the world suggest the commitment of schools to build on structures for ‘job-embedded learning’.

School B’s distinctive in-house CPD opportunities include:

- i. Coaching for Leadership
- ii. Coaching for Learning
- iii. Learning and Teaching Group Workshops.

Coaching for Leadership and Coaching for Learning were discussed earlier in this chapter, so the discussion below focuses on *Learning and Teaching Group Workshops*. Contributing to a plethora of in-house activities for teachers’ pedagogical development, the establishment of learning and teaching group workshops, run by ‘outstanding’ teachers, gives school B a learning-centred school dimension.

### *Comparing the Greek schools*

The two schools in Greece offer CPD through *official central provision*.

Teachers’ professional development has been mainly provided through the Ministry-sponsored training seminars- run by subject advisers, the Pedagogical Institute, the Prefectural Training Centre (PEK), the Hellenic Mathematics Society, and the Laboratory Centre for Physical Sciences (EKFE). Frost’s (2012:

216) comment that ‘dissatisfaction with outmoded forms of CPD [is] reflected in low numbers of teachers attending professional development events’ is echoed in the Greek case studies. Case study participants criticised the ineffective nature of the Ministry sponsored CPD programmes mainly because they are perceived to be out of date, following outmoded teaching practices, or because of inappropriate times and venues, a view which confirms the findings of Vitsilaki-Soroniati (2002) and Konidari and Abernot’s (2006) in Greece, and OECD’s (2009) study in European countries.

Both Greek schools also offer differentiated *unofficial in-house development*.

The value of in-school training for the professional improvement of teachers was stressed in school D. The strategy of sharing good practice, material and ideas has been a matter of debate within school C, despite the recognition of its benefits to improving the quality of teaching and in ensuring consistency in lessons. This confirms Vitsilaki-Soroniati’s (2002: 43) view that ‘teachers have not experienced alternative training programmes such as in-house, collaborative professional development programmes within their own schools, [as] teachers do not believe that these trends could be implemented in the Greek school context [...]’

In contrast, model school D was able to provide unofficial in-house professional development courses for its teachers. One example is provision for Music teachers across schools, and this is linked to its model school status. Biniari’s (2012) research showed that practices enhancing teachers’ learning within their schools are not put in place. However, the examples from this research illustrate

a tendency of some participants to look beyond the status quo and develop proactive mechanisms to influence their professional learning.

#### *Cross-country comparison*

The sense of similarities in the cross-country analysis is articulated under the central provision of CPD opportunities through staff development training with the purpose of encouraging pedagogical improvement for school change. However, the centralised opportunities supporting teachers' learning were not often regarded positively due to the perception that they are not linked to classroom practice, as they dictate generic blueprints in teaching, especially in Greece. There is a similar debate in the English context, about whether external provision is highly connected to practice (e.g. school B).

The main differentiated feature across the two systems is the establishment of in-house training within the English schools which seems to be linked to the national strategy (e.g. NCSL 2004a, b; NCSL 2011) for teacher development. Whilst the English cases support the establishment of a contextualised CPD, they value a school-based learning repertoire for the encouragement of personalized capacity building. This is not the case within the centralised Greek context, despite the attempts of the model school (D) to develop professional development opportunities for their colleagues within and across schools in the same directorate, complying with government expectations.

## Overview

Comparing educational organisations in different educational systems through a three-phase comparative analysis showed the interplay between the macro-level policies, embedded in institutional practices. The multi-vocal cross-country comparative study highlighted the contrast between a highly centralised and a relatively decentralised context in influencing school stakeholders' practices for school improvement. There was evidence from the English schools and the literature that there is a shift from hierarchical to horizontal forms of instructional leadership in high performing schools in England whereas the centralised policy imperatives in Greece do not allow flexibility for formal distribution of practices to encourage shared leadership for learning.

However, although leadership is influenced by the context where it is exercised, it is not constrained totally by centralisation, as there were elements of informal instructional leadership practices in the Greek schools. Developing teachers' learning improvement and leadership capacity have been striking examples of co-constructed instructional leadership in the two outstanding English secondary schools. This links to the notion of shared leadership in the English schools, in contrast to those in Greece. It seems that the tightly prescribed domains of influence are for Greek principals' domain to be the whole school while teachers' domain remains their classroom. This is less evident in the English partially decentralized context, which allows more scope for initiative and a collaborative in-house learning community.

The next chapter provides the conclusions of this thesis.



## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The aim of chapter nine is to provide an overview of the research and of associated concepts. The research questions are answered from a cross-country comparative perspective, leading to discussion of the empirical and theoretical significance of the study. Subsequently, a grounded theory model of IL in a centralised context is developed for a more nuanced understanding of research and practice on instructional leadership.

### Answering the Research Questions

*What is the nature of instructional leadership in English high-performing secondary schools?*

Given the high level of accountability in English schools, stakeholders' actions pivot around school improvement, while the strategies adopted have a shared instructional leadership orientation within a formal hierarchical framework, as described later. The shift to engage teachers in the core activities for sustaining a high quality teaching and learning culture entails their critical contribution to leadership with a direct effect on collegial learning in contrast to the indirect impact on student outcomes. However, data in the two researched outstanding schools highlighted a hierarchical distribution of collective actions for creating pedagogical norms to establish an influential learning process for all stakeholders. These high performing secondary schools in a partially-decentralised educational

system possess features of strong principal strategic leadership with a significant focus on managing teaching and learning. The case study schools both feature a constrained collaborative pattern, limited both by central government prescription and the dominant role of the SLT, which raises issues about the nature of shared instructional leadership.

Another distinctive feature of IL in the English schools, with a more prominent presence in school B, is a tendency towards personalised teaching and learning, and this may link to the desire to sustain their outstanding status. Leaders in both schools stress the importance of personalization to enhance student learning.

A third feature of IL is a culture for continuing professional learning with the purpose of sustaining the excellent practices as well as improving less effective teaching and learning. More frequent peer-learning, to ensure sharing of best practices, has been reinforced by collaborative learning activities (e.g. mentoring, coaching, modelling) which fuel professional reflective dialogues.

*What is the nature of instructional leadership in Greek high-performing secondary schools?*

Instructional leadership is not given a top priority as the internal and external expectations are that principals will be managerial leaders, implementing the expectations of the bureaucracy. This leads to the development of an informal adoption of instructional leadership practices, which are mainly led by the teachers working in the same discipline. A hierarchical delegation of actions is

expected in a centralised system, but in both researched schools, all teachers had the same limited opportunities to enact leadership, notably IL. Principals and subject advisers' instructional leadership is constrained by their government bounded roles and teacher leadership is occupying the limited IL space. Teachers established informal shared leadership practices to ensure that pedagogical initiatives are put in place to support the development of the 'lost purpose of Greek state schools, which must be the school as the main tool for student achievements' (CC1), as noted by teachers.

The two main research questions are supported by a series of sub-questions, intended to provide a deeper understanding of key dimensions of instructional leadership. Answers to the following sub-questions address these issues:

*i) Whether, and to what extent, English and Greek principals are instructional leaders?*

This thesis confirms that, in both devolved and centralised systems, there is no 'one size fits all approach' (Southworth, 2010: 181) adopted by school principals, as the nature of their role remains multi-dimensional. This is congruent with Hallinger's (2003a: 334) view that IL 'was not and will never be the *only* role of the school principal'.

Instructional leadership has been adopted by both English principals as an effective leadership approach, providing the platform for implementing government policy in these outstanding schools. An increasing focus on student

outcomes, and the high level of principal accountability for school performance, leads to principals exercising a strategic instructional leadership role, and this echoes the English literature (e.g. Day et al., 2008; MacBeath and Swaffield, 2008) that principal leadership effects on learning are largely indirect. In contrast, it is unrealistic for principals in a highly centralised educational context to act as ILs in Greece. The constraints of the hierarchy, and the highly administrative orientation of Greek principalship (Biniari, 2012; Saliaris, 2009; Christodoulou, 2007; Saitis, 2005; Stravakou, 2003), means that instructional leadership is not given a high priority. However, as well as identifying principals as policy implementors and government agents, model school D was able to create an environment conducive to a 'learning culture for all'.

*ii) If so, how do they act as instructional leaders?*

Understanding principals as instructional leaders requires their leadership actions' translation into a culture conducive to learning. Since both English school leaders' vision focuses on learning, principals endorsed the development of a learning-centred culture, as a key dimension of IL. This culture includes creating and strengthening the environment for professional development and student learning. The development of an instructional leadership culture created a wide leadership alliance committed to effective teaching as a way to lead learning and teachers' professional development. These cultures coalesce around principals' predominant role in determining the IL roles embraced by other members of staff. This dimension is consistent with the views of other scholars (Barth, 1990; Day

et al., 2001) that IL is a top-down approach where principals coordinate school staff to move towards achieving set goals (Hallinger, 2003a: 343).

In the Greek context, where heads' role is more utilitarian, as managerial officials of the system, instructional leadership is deemed to be of secondary importance in a bureaucratically driven school reality. However, both Greek headteachers were able to introduce IL initiatives, under the umbrella of curriculum timetable changes, to maximize final year students' learning. The headteacher of model school D had more discretion to enact informal instructional leadership behaviours, to support teachers' instructional development, which indirectly influenced student learning. The experimental-model nature of school D created a platform for the principal to have an active involvement in music curriculum design, supporting unofficial intervention lessons with elements of student learning personalization, and encouraging model teaching across the schools in the same district.

However, recognising that IL is not confined to the principals' leadership domain, a sense of shared and distributed leadership prevails in the four researched schools, while its implementation is inevitably linked to system constraints. The thesis shows the emergence of distributed leadership capacity (Harris, 2008; Arrowsmith, 2007; Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Day et al., 2009) in the two researched English schools, albeit within a proactive hierarchical IL culture. The two English deputy heads have a prominent IL role in developing and orchestrating the conditions for an effective teaching-learning process leading to outstanding results, while strengthening departmental leadership seems to be influential in securing an effective operational instructional domain, mainly

through developing a sharing pedagogical environment ‘in communities of practice.’ (Printy, 2008: 214). Both Greek HPSS cases provide evidence of an existing unofficial instructional ‘teacher leadership’ (Frost<sup>35</sup>, 2012) culture, which exposes an increasing potential for reconsidering leadership in Greek state schools. Filling the pedagogical gap created by the ineffectiveness of subject advisers’ role, and the outmoded nature of CPD, seems to lead to construction of informal reflective learning cultures, mainly within subject expertise networks.

*iii) What is the relationship between instructional leadership and student outcomes?*

The multi-level analysis of this study confirmed the indirect impact of leadership on student cognitive outcomes, while the influence inevitably varies across the two contrasting systems. What emanates from the English highly accountable ‘results-driven policy context’ (Day et al., 2008: 13) is that it is reasonable to infer mediated links between student progress and the school’s instructional leadership practices, mainly shared ownership reflected in the departmental monitoring of student outcomes. As findings reveal, the relationship of instructional leadership with student progress is indirect, through a synergy between senior and middle leaders within:

- The departmental improvement plan

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<sup>35</sup>Teacher leadership is a ‘leadership [which is not] automatically linked with positions in the organisational hierarchy of the school.’ (Frost, 2012: 210) Other international researchers (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Spillane and Diamond, 2007) have also recognized teachers’ legitimate leadership role in schools.

Evidence in both English schools shows that curriculum reviewing to enhancing pupils' academic needs acts as a lever for raising learning standards. The main emphasis was on a personalized vision for learning through a wide range of GCSE subject choices. Although, in this study, there is no direct evidence linking leadership to student progress, school A research participants' perceptions advocate the personalised nature of curriculum as a strategy for improving achievements (see p. 142). An additional important theme emerged in school B is the positional leaders' instructional leadership role in raising standards through monitoring student progress and offering intervention strategies to under-performing students.

- The robust student target setting and student progress

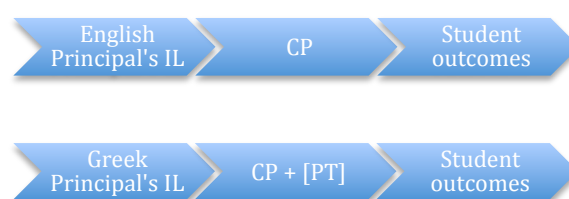
Improving learning remains the prime aim in the English high-performing schools, while leaders' persistence of a systematic and consistent target setting and intervention has been recognised as a strategy to maximising student progress. The most striking evidence is middle and senior leaders' use of data to contribute to their strategic development plan. In both English schools, the systematic monitoring of student results had an impact on reducing variations across departments, while an emphasis on value-added determined the strategies for monitoring individual student's performance.

- Improving professional learning

What emanates from evidence in school A and B is the emergence of a systematic teachers' performance monitoring as a driving force to secure students' progress. In school A, learning-centred leadership to improve teaching staff capacity development has been highlighted as an indirect avenue and

contribution to enhancing the instructional quality for students' learning. At the heart of the process of enhancing student outcomes is the development of professional learning communities in school B. Capacity building to value learning is not considered as a stand-alone strategy to enhance teachers' development, but its critical role to driving student learning is highlighted in school B. The centrality of learning in sharing good teaching practices and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning via developmental procedures (e.g. Learning Walks; Coaching for Learning) is evidence of the mediated effects of instructional leadership on student learning.

In addition, these English leaders interact with teachers to 'sustain the changes required for improved outcomes.' (Robinson et al., 2008: 667) This confirms previous findings in England (e.g. Arrowsmith, 2007; Day et al., 2007b) and internationally (Hallinger, 2003a; Robinson et al. 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 2010a,b) of the indirect effect of leadership on outcomes. Interpreting the relationship between principal's IL and student outcomes into a process diagram (Figure 9.1) suggests a 'mediated effect' (Hallinger and Heck, 1997) through teachers' instructional influence. In other words, English principals' IL is guiding classroom practice (CP), and in turn, indirectly leading to student outcomes.



**Figure 9.1:** *Process diagram of IL influence to student learning*



This point is reinforced in Leithwood et al.'s (2006a: 5) claim that '[s]chool leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning.' In the Greek case (see Figure 9.1), the classroom practice effects on student outcomes are likely to be weaker because of the influence of private tuition (PT). Leaders' impact is diluted because of the limited scope for leaders to enact IL in a hierarchical setting as well as because of the prevalence of private tuition provision, which makes it difficult to attribute high performance to school-level actions. This confirms Antoniou's (2012: 628) view of private tuition as a 'factor which is associated with student achievement [in Cyprus]'. The constrained nature of internal and external leaders' instructional leadership role led to the emergence of teacher IL to fill this 'space', not only through what is happening in their classrooms but, also, through acting collaboratively with their peers to enhance their professional development and student learning.

*iv) How does instructional leadership impact on teachers' performance?*

The nexus of leaders' instructional leadership and teachers' performance is shaped by a thread of interwoven practices, which are maximised through the two key approaches emerging from the data:

- Monitoring teachers' performance through classroom observations contributed to teachers' professional development in the English schools and appears to be a key aspect of effective IL in these schools. Instructional leadership had a much more limited impact on the Greek teachers, mainly because evaluation is not enacted in Greek state schools.

- Encouraging collaboration to develop a culture for professional improvement is a feature of the two English schools. Pedagogical quality is developed and improved through a system of mentoring, coaching and modeling. In contrast, in the Greek high-performing schools, instructional dialogue develops informally with only a limited role for formal leaders. Despite the different nature of these practices, they both reinforce the significance of teacher ownership of their ongoing professional learning, while allowing scope for ‘bottom up’ initiatives to support teachers’ practices.

v) *How does instructional leadership impact on teachers’ professional development?*

This thesis supports previous research (e.g. Pansiri, 2008; Day et al., 2007b; Ali and Botha, 2006; Timperley, 2006; Southworth, 2002) which shows that IL is about leading teachers’ professional learning. Within the four case study schools, learning -to a greater or lesser extent- is at the heart of schooling, while there are both scheduled and unscheduled opportunities for professional growth, as summarized below:

- Capacity building to improve the intellectual and social capital of the teachers (Dimmock, 2012) was one of the most powerful practices to assist teacher development and learning. Building professional knowledge has been conceived, in the English schools, as a formally delegated pedagogical method aligned to teachers’ professional development needs. In the Greek setting, it takes the form of

collaborative learning activities which fuel an in-house professional dialogue and experiential learning. In both countries, the role of the school leaders is instrumental in the creation of teachers' communities of practice (Printy, 2008). This is enacted in England through pedagogical developmental approaches, including mentoring and coaching, but its limited implementation in Greece may be related to a lack of 'mutual trust, respect and support', which constitute some of the main characteristics for an effective professional learning community. (Bolam et al., 2005: i)

The nature of collaborative professional learning, as described above, is a feature of the IL model in HPSS, which invests in peer-learning support to enhance teachers' development.

*vi) What is the relationship between instructional leadership and school improvement?*

Evidence from the two diverse educational systems showed that the school improvement domain is mainly connected to raising instructional standards (teaching) and student outcomes (learning), as a consequence of IL. Inevitably, therefore, there are overlaps with some of the earlier questions. The contribution of instructional leadership dimensions to school improvement is stressed below:

- Participants in the English case study schools were involved –to a greater or lesser extent- in collaborative learning-centred activities (e.g., coaching for professional learning, pedagogical dialogues) associated

with instructional changes operating within their schools. The relationship between IL, learning and school improvement suggested that teachers were mediators of the improvement pathway. However, this was perceived differently in the Greek context, as the limited scope does not allow sufficient space for shaping a resilient pedagogical community within the school for shared and sustainable pedagogical change.

- Distributed leadership (DL) among senior and middle leaders was a key driver of instructional improvement and student learning in the English schools, whilst DL is also a growing expectation in the wider system (e.g., Muijs and Harris, 2007; Spillane et al., 2007; Gronn, 2008). The amalgam of senior and middle leadership provides leadership density for school improvement with an indirect contribution to student learning via teachers, while Leithwood et al. (2006b) show that distributed leadership contributes to better student outcomes. The Greek principals allowed teachers scope to use unofficial mechanisms to improve classroom learning, for example through the use of internal student performance data.

*vii) How do approaches to instructional leadership differ between centralised systems (e.g. Greece) and 'partially de-centralised' systems (e.g. England)?*

There is growing evidence of the significance of context for school leadership (e.g. Dimmock and Walker, 2000a; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Southworth, 2003; Day et al., 2008). This is even more evident when comparing such contrasting systems as those prevailing in centralised Greece and partly

decentralised England. The author's research evidence confirms that leadership execution varies markedly by context, while the similarities arise from implementing government policy. This also raises questions about the boundaries of, and opportunities for, leadership enactment in centralised and relatively decentralised educational contexts.

More specifically, within the centralised Greek context, an informal horizontal and limited IL pattern may be the outcome of a tightly prescribed organizational system whereas, in the relatively decentralised English context, the picture of a hierarchically shared and distributed IL links to central government expectations for outstanding schools. However, given that leadership actions are spread, despite the accountability regime in England and the centralised norms in Greece, the main contrast was between:

- the nature of instructional leadership, notably formally enacted in England and informally decentralised by the principal in Greece,
- the IL actors nature, where, in the English context there is a significant IL distribution. In contrast, in the Greek setting, there is a limited school-based IL adopted by official leaders, while the role is conceived as an external role. This external control is partly via the subject advisers but, in practice, this is not fully enacted, and disparaged by school teachers and leaders. As a consequence, this leaves space for informal school-level instructional leadership exercised by teachers.

Another key distinction relates to attitudes to performance evaluation. In Greek schools, there is resistance to activating this practice, because it is perceived as

surveillance, whereas, in the English contexts, this was seen as a necessary strategy for teachers' pedagogical improvement, and providing an indirect influence on student outcomes, even though the inspection process itself was often unwelcome.

## **Significance of the Research**

This section addresses the empirical and theoretical significance of this research on comparative IL in a cross-country context. As Bray and Kai (2007: 138) highlight, '[...] the differences between the [...] systems might be considered not so much a problem as an opportunity for research, an arena for empirical and theoretical challenges, and a source of lessons for policy and practice.'

### Empirical significance

Given the significance of leadership in enhancing learning, this study contributes to generating new knowledge on instructional leadership through its contribution to different contexts. This research is believed to be the first in-depth, empirical and comparative study of the nature of instructional leadership in Greece and England, with a significant empirical contribution to:

- IL in Greece
- IL in centralized systems
- IL in outstanding secondary schools
- Comparative study of England and Greece

### *Instructional Leadership in Greece*

As noted in chapter two, there is very little evidence on various aspects of school leadership and management in Greece (e.g. Demertzi et al., 2009; Biniari, 2012). Moreover, this is the first major study of IL in Greece and the data provide the basis for understanding the distinctive elements that comprise instructional leadership in that context. The distinctive features of IL in Greece are non-positional teacher leadership, linked to central government imperatives which constrain IL implementation by formal leaders. Participative IL in Greek secondary schools is developed through a series of unofficial initiatives, including personalised student learning and in-house peer professional discussions, and this finding adds to the little that is already known about Greek school management.

### *Instructional leadership in centralised systems*

The thesis also provides a contribution to the study of IL in European centralised systems. The literature shows that relatively little is known about IL in centralised and bureaucratic contexts because the literature is based on Western contexts. The apparent limited scope for school-based IL, may have discouraged scholars from exploring this concept. However, the author's research revealed the emergence of a nexus of IL relationships, which do not depend on hierarchical norms. In centralised systems, it is unrealistic for schools to eliminate the notion of hierarchy. However, the constraints on principals' instructional leadership, arising from their predominant administrative role,

provides space for teachers to collaborate in building a shared pedagogical culture.

### *Instructional leadership in outstanding secondary schools*

As noted in chapter two, there are few international empirical studies in high performing schools (e.g. Murphy et al., 2007; Ofsted, 2009; Printy et al., 2009; Macfarlane and Woods, 2011), which present and analyse evidence about instructional leadership. The current thesis shows that certain IL practices, manifested in high-performing schools, such as monitoring teachers' performance and developing leadership capacity, significantly influence school performance, notably in the English empirical cases. The argument that IL is more evident in successful schools (e.g. Robinson et al., 2008; Bossert et al. 1982) is partially confirmed by the author's research. In contrast, the main focus in the Greek schools relates to the influence of external (private tuition) agents on student outcomes. This thesis provides new evidence about the difficulties of attributing enhanced student outcomes to school-level leadership, when such external factors exert considerable influence.

### *Comparative study of England and Greece*

This thesis is also distinctive in that it brings together two contrasting countries in terms of policy and practice, through an exploration of one common model of leadership. The literature shows that there is only limited research exploring IL/ LfL across two or more countries (e.g. MacBeath and Swaffield, 2008; OECD, 2009), and the author's research is significant as the first in-depth comparative



study of England and Greece. Crossley and Watson (2003: 129) acknowledge the importance of reconceptualising comparative research in education ‘to improve [...] impact upon specific policy and practice, while strengthening genuinely global theoretical insights and understanding.’ As a consequence, the development of a micro-level conceptualization of IL, which has previously received little attention, adds to the empirical knowledge base that has grown around comparative leadership.

### Theoretical Significance

The result of this cross-country empirical study is the original contribution to knowledge in terms of the intellectual growth of the researched leadership domain. Given that the instructional leadership literature has been, at a certain extent, explored internationally, mainly under a quantitative stance and with a principal-centred orientation, the author’s in-depth qualitative work is distinctive in the way that it brings together the conceptual domain of IL and the ‘how’ of leaders’ and teachers’ enactment of practices leading to organizational learning. There are two specific aspects of theoretical significance:

- Collaborative and reciprocal IL
- A focus on learning rather than teaching

#### *Collaborative and reciprocal IL*

The first contribution of this thesis to theoretical development is made through the argument of a shift towards collaborative and reciprocal perspectives of instructional leadership. Barth’s (1990) critique of the heroic model of

instructional leadership underpins a grounded exploration of how IL is embedded in staff activities associated with school improvement. The knowledge base for IL captured in this thesis extends international understanding of distributed or shared instructional leadership (Marks and Printy, 2003; Lee et al., 2012). Collaborative leadership (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a,b) was most evident in the English cases, where a reciprocal pedagogical culture was also evident. Despite the hierarchical limitations, the pedagogical empowerment of the Greek teachers creates the notion of teachers' participative instructional leadership culture. This relates not only to curriculum ownership, featured in other European literature – for instance, Norris et al. (1996) for Finland and Boyd-Barrett and O'Malley (1995) for Spain- but also links to other instructional leadership activities (e.g. monitoring student progress, mentoring and coaching), which are not necessarily related to the school hierarchy or centralised imperatives.

#### *A focus on learning rather than teaching*

A growing focus on learning instead of teaching is the second aspect of theoretical significance, despite the IL name suggesting a focus on 'instruction [which] predisposes people to think in terms of teaching rather than learning [...]'. (MacBeath, 2006: 39) However, the emerging Leadership for Learning concept is moving more towards learning, as discussed in the literature review. This thesis extends the understanding of learning-centred leadership (e.g. Hallinger, 2009; MacBeath and Swaffield, 2008; Dimmock, 2000b) through the lens of teachers' learning '[...] which in turn, can be transferred and applied in [classroom learning] across the entire school.' (Southworth, 2004b: 111) The

theoretical significance of this point is highlighted in the grounded theory model (see next section), which strengthens the focus on peer-pedagogical learning rather than teaching, leading to in-house ‘sharing of teaching’ collegial learning communities. The conceptualization of a reincarnated instructional leadership to Leadership for Learning (Hallinger, 2009; 2010) signifies a shift to a learning paradigm.

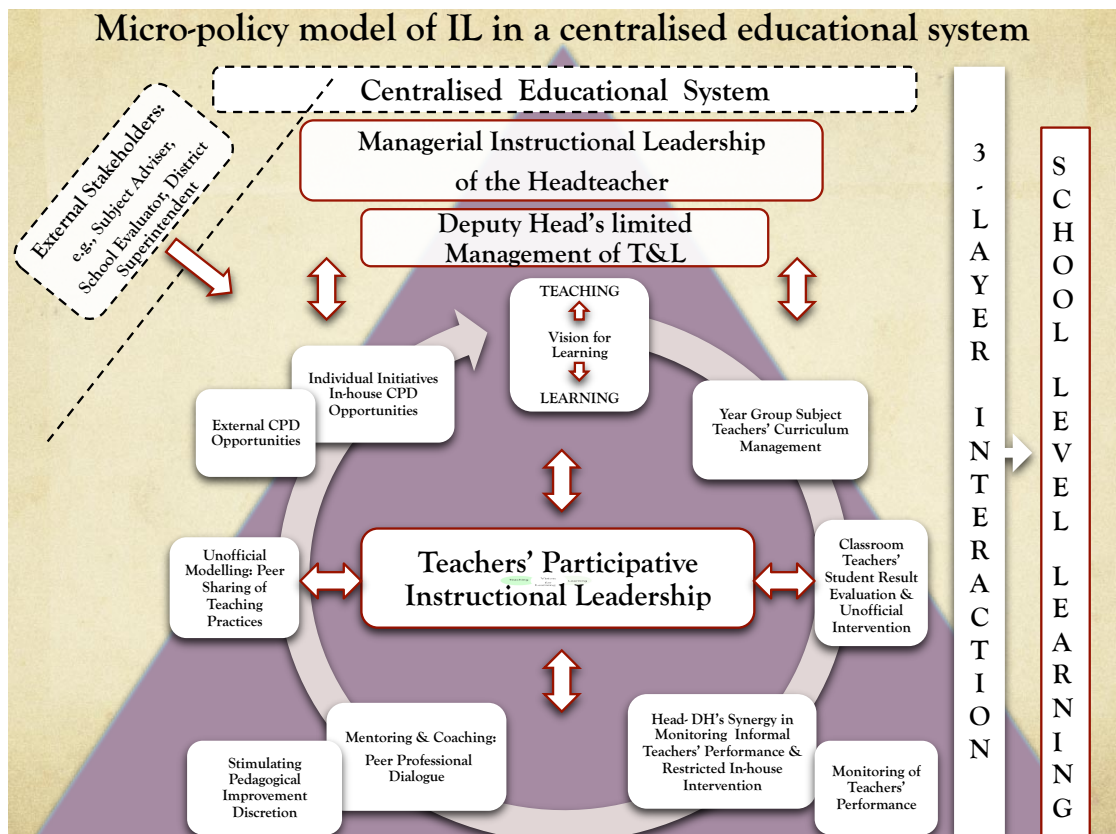
### **Towards a Grounded Theory Model of IL in a Centralised Context**

The Greek evidence provides the starting point for designing a model of IL for centralised contexts. The model begins with a recognition that the scope of leadership is limited in contrast to more decentralised systems, formal structures do not allow enough room for innovation, school stakeholders expect guidelines to be cascaded by the Ministry while others are scared and reluctant to execute leadership, and professional development opportunities are weak.

Figure 9.2 illustrates the centralised model, with an attempt to theorise on how instructional leadership is enacted within the constraints of centralised and usually conservative educational contexts. The rationale for creating an alternative leadership model for centralised state secondary school contexts is grounded in the evidence showing a growing ‘bottom-up’ interest from stakeholders to create their own informal learning communities within their schools. Following the theoretical significance of this thesis, the pyramid model illustrating a hierarchical structure, proposes a view of instructional leadership

change through bottom-up approaches, rather than top down prescription, with the purpose of affecting school level learning.

The hierarchy, external power and formal positions of authority, prevalent in centralised systems, indicate that the ‘power is [...] linked to extrinsic factors [and] leadership [...] from the top’ (Dimmock and Walker, 2005: 119). This is illustrated in Figure 9.2 in the intermittent lined boxes representing the macro-level influence. The pyramidal model reflects the managerial role of the headteachers with an instructional leadership orientation in order to create reflective pedagogical learning and the platform for unofficial student learning improvement. Taking into account the criticism of the ‘solo- hero’ model, the conceptualization of IL in such a hierarchical system moves beyond the principal-IL model. Given that principals in secondary schools have different subject expertise from the majority of teachers, their role is ‘instrumental in shaping opportunities for teachers to learn in communities of practice’ (Printy, 2008: 187) across fields of expertise.



**Figure 9.2:** *Grounded theory model of IL in a centralised educational system*

Moving top-down, as the pyramid suggests, it is not surprising that in-school formal leaders have a limited direct authority on learning, given, also, the narrow foci of the deputy heads' role and the consequences of the 'invisible' role of subject advisers in the Greek schools, while '[i]nstructional leadership demands an active role in classroom practice based on high levels of pedagogical expertise' (Leithwood, 1994: 502). Subject advisers and other external actors (e.g. district officials, superintendents) are not supposed to abdicate their pedagogical responsibilities but that is beyond the scope of this research.

A synthesis of IL and collegial concepts influence the conceptualisation of the proposed model, which postulates an interaction<sup>36</sup> among the school actors within a cycle of instructional activities for growth, orchestrating by official channels of leadership –the headteacher- as portrayed above. The IL practices are illustrated in a circular sequence to show their interrelationship, while a strong emphasis on individual and collaborative classroom teachers’ enactment of leadership, links to a teachers’ instructional leadership trend. The proposed model shows the dynamic of teachers’ participative role in exerting instructional influence, while recognising Ogawa and Bossert’s (1995) theoretical premise of shared instructional leadership and Hallinger’s (2011a) synthesised model of Leadership for Learning.

In this model, teachers are regarded more as subjects and transmitters of change than objects and mediators. Since centralised leaders have limited discretion for coordinating an instructional leadership direction, this study refines teachers’ leadership behaviours towards teaching and learning within a participative restructuring. Regenerating in-house human capital (e.g. teachers) that has not been effectively used in the past, is one vital element of this proposed IL model. Reinforcing capacity building within state schools with the purpose of redefining teachers’ role in school improvement requires a culture of trust and interaction, while the increasing number of informal teachers’ leadership suggests a potential change towards peer-sharing patterns. The impact of the stakeholders’ actions in

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<sup>36</sup> Notes for Figure 9.2: The size and shape of arrows could be used to indicate relative strength (strong-low) and force (direct-indirect, one way - mutual). The solid arrows indicate the two-way interactions between school leaders and teachers’ leadership under the IL cyclical process; the smallest arrows in the pyramid indicate VfL foci; the 3-layer interaction arrow covers the space creating a potential impact of the internal – external interaction leading to school level learning.

this internal policy has the potential to impact on school-level learning, through a reflective learning building among peers.

The proposed model, considerably adjusted for a leadership preparation model and newly qualified teachers' induction model, is likely to help in changing the culture, which perpetuates an obsolete status quo in a centralised educational system.

## **Recommendations**

A number of generic and national recommendations for further research have emerged from this study's findings. These lie beyond the scope of the present research, but warrant a more thorough exploration.

### Generic Recommendations

Grounded in the findings from this study, three generic recommendations for further research are proposed:

*The application of IL within a European comparative perspective across centralized and decentralized educational systems*

Further research in examining the potential of IL applicability in centralised and decentralised European contextual settings would establish a new school of knowledge, building on the author's research in England and Greece. The conceptualisation of IL within different policy mandates confirms the

significance of context in influencing the scope of leadership execution. Whilst this study adds substantially to the understanding of Western practices in centralised and partially decentralised confluences of leadership, it recognises the operational as well as a strongly strategic principal's role. The application of instructional leadership is notably learning oriented and leads to maximizing both student and teachers' capacity. The author's recommendation is to widen the current research to include other centralised and decentralized European systems.

*Researching instructional leadership practices across a range of secondary school types*

The under-explored contextualized nature of instructional leadership in a range of secondary school types (e.g. outstanding- good- satisfactory- inadequate performing schools) suggests an area for further fruitful discussion and comparisons. Whilst the four researched schools' status (high-performing) may have established a tight research focus, the research needs to be broadened to include different types of secondary school, with an emphasis on how instructional leadership is enacted. This is connected to Leithwood et al.'s (2006a: 28) work, which highlights that 'what is contingent about leadership is not the basic or core practices but the way they are enacted.' Given that there is little empirical accumulation of evidence exploring IL across a range of schools with different levels of performance, the recommendation of replicating this study may have value for the field in examining whether some IL practices have a different nature and impact on school. The author recommends a mixed



methods longitudinal study to be conducted in order to explore how IL differs in average, below average and outstanding schools. Robinson et al.'s (2008: 657) meta-analysis indicates that 'there are substantial differences between the leadership of otherwise similar high- and low-performing schools, and that those differences matter for student academic outcomes.'

### *Senior and middle level instructional leadership*

As noted earlier in this thesis, most research is on the principal's IL role but Hallinger and Heck (2010b) and Leithwood et al. (2006b) point to a more distributed IL role. Similarly, the findings of the current research capture that the notion of instructional leadership is deployed at different levels through formal and informal interactions. The author's recommendation is that more empirical research of instructional leadership practices extended beyond principalship should be conducted.

Whilst the preponderance of the discussion here highlights generic recommendations for additional research, the following section offers suggestions for future empirical research at an individual national level, in order to give further insights on the issues discussed within each country's sample schools in the present study.

## England

### *Further research on instructional system leadership*

Given that outstanding schools, academy chains and federations work as ‘change agents’ (Pont et al., 2008: 122) within the English system, further research is recommended to explore the emergence of this newly constructed term (by the author) ‘instructional system leadership’. This term has emerged from evidence of system leadership, mainly in school B<sup>37</sup>, leading to the growth of new educational systems which boost performance in challenging partner schools. The author’s argument, to conceive instructional system leadership opportunities for schools facing challenging circumstances, springs from evidence mainly in the National Support School (case study B). This suggests that building system leadership, as a supportive mechanism for improving challenging schools’ performance, can be achieved through:

- creating a culture of higher expectations,
- establishing a monitoring system, and,
- building professional learning through collaborative professional development opportunities.

This is partially echoed in Higham and Hopkins’ (2010) work in English schools, while ‘building and distributing capacity in the system’ (Huber et al., 2007: 34) is also important within system leadership (e.g. School Improvement Partners, National Leaders of Education). The emergence of ‘instructional system leadership’ suggests an area for further research on how both outstanding schools

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<sup>37</sup> Since it was not within the scope of this research to involve external partners in the English research settings, this study provided very limited data (school B participants’ views and an observation of a leadership day) about system leadership initiatives, in order to be able to triangulate school B’s self-reporting finding. This suggests, therefore, that it would be worthwhile to explore the emerged notion of ‘instructional system leadership’ in a further research.

and those in challenging circumstances in England conceive this instructional partnership.

## Greece

### *Researching the reconstructed proposed IL model for centralised educational systems*

The author's model of practice within schools with limited devolved power, provides a framework for further research. This is required in order to test the applicability of the proposed conceptual model in centralised educational systems, with the purpose of understanding leadership relationships within a school and, hence, improving the nature of existing pedagogical and leadership practices. The research design should be constructed based around a three-level model - external influences, senior leaders and teacher leaders- which explores the IL roles and actors at each level.

## **Limitations of the Research**

First, this work is necessarily limited in scope by involving only a single researcher. Hence, widening its scope, as suggested above, may reveal more promising findings, which validate a set of leadership practices in high-performing secondary schools (HPSS). The study may also be limited because of the risk of bias arising from the author's prior knowledge of the Greek educational system. Also, conducting cross-country comparative research in two dissimilar educational contexts suggests a limitation as this was non-parallel

research (centralised vs partially decentralised), while the depth may also be compromised by this choice.

In terms of methodological limitations, the researcher acknowledges three elements related to difficulties in the research sampling:

- the tight choice of the researched sample schools in Greece, based only on the students' national examination results in order to define HPSS, given that Greek schools are not subject to school evaluation,
- the use of equivalent Greek stakeholders (the most experienced subject teachers) to the English designated middle leaders, and ,
- the inclusion of external stakeholders in one country setting. The inclusion of subject advisers in the Greek context was to ensure the participation of a central instructional leadership player, but this also contributed to partially non-parallel research.

As no two schools and systems are the same, some organizational aspects lie outside the researcher's jurisdiction. Although some limitations and critique may have arisen from these issues, the researcher decided to follow a partly non-parallel research pattern, to adapt the study in response to the different contexts. As a result of these limitations, this study's findings cannot be generalized beyond the four case study schools.

## **Overview of the Chapter and the Thesis**

This thesis yields significant insights into how educational stakeholders in dissimilar educational systems interpret instructional leadership in their

contextualized HPSS, giving rise to a conclusion that their implemented practices link to contextual and institutional variables. The cross-country comparative analysis of the four in-depth qualitative case studies showed that convergence and divergence within the IL practices are significantly related to policy imperatives and micro-leadership interpretation of governmental expectations. Gaining insights on how practices are enacted in the devolved English system, and the Greek centralised context, provides a challenge to the notion of ‘one country one system’ (Dimmock and Walker, 1998a,b, 2000a; Bray and Kai, 2007). Consequently, this notion does not ensure homogeneity in policy implementation, because school-level dynamics influence the architecture of leadership for learning, as a result of their contextualized needs.

The conceptualization of leadership in the four HPSS cases shows an increased engagement of stakeholders in learning-centred leadership, within a collaborative IL orientation. However, the introduction of the ‘participative teachers’ instructional leadership’ concept contradicts the established perceptions of a paucity of leadership within the Greek system. This striking finding provides a basis for reconstructing the instructional leadership model for centralised educational systems, thus contributing to the theoretical significance of the thesis through a grounded theory model.

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## APPENDIX A: Principal Interview Schedule – Questions

Before we start, I would like to thank you for being willing to take part in the interview. Firstly, I would like to assure that you will remain anonymous and only the researcher will have access to the raw data collected for the research. I am interested in your perspectives on managing teaching and learning within a High-Performing School. The interview is intended to be noninvasive and confidential. It should last approximately 1 hour and you are free to stop the voice recorder or withdraw from the interview at any time.

### Personal & background information

Pseudonym used in the analysis of the study: School:..... Principal: .....

Gender:.....Male..... / .....Female.....

Total professional experience		Total number of years service in principalship		Number of years experience as a principal at this school	
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

Academic Qualification: ..... BA .... / ..... MA/ MSc ..... / .....PhD .....

- What preparation and training have you undertaken in terms of leadership?

[National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), MA]

Type of School:.....Community...../ .....Foundation...../ ...Voluntary aided...

Geographical Area of school: .....

The main focus of my research study is Leadership for Learning/ Instructional Leadership. My intention is to identify the way you, as the school head, manage Teaching and Learning and to explore whether and to what extent your Instructional Leadership (IL) practices foster learning in High Performing Schools. Throughout face-to-face interviews I will examine any issues related to your attitudes to IL so as to gain an insight on the instructional strategies and their influence to student outcomes and teachers' professional growth.

The following dimensions (B-D) form the principles for an Instructional Leadership practice, for the scope of this research.

<b>A1.</b>	<b>School Management and Leadership</b>
------------	---

*As the headteacher of this school,*

- *What proportion of time do you devote to activities which are related to IL/ Leadership for Learning (LfL)?*

[Prompts: School's Vision; Curriculum and teaching related tasks; Teacher's professional development; Evaluating and monitoring students' work progress; Evaluating school's performance]

- *What are your main activities in the rest of your school time?*

[Prompts: Administrative tasks; build parental involvement & good relationships]

- *Are there any other members of the SLT or Middle Managers highly involved in the LfL activities?*

<b>A2.</b>	<b>School Improvement</b>
------------	---------------------------

- *What is your role in promoting school improvement?*
- *To what extent are the teachers involved in school improvement?*
- *What are your school improvement targets for this school?*

<b>B.</b>	<b>Vision for Learning – Defining school mission</b>
-----------	--

- *What is your vision for learning?*

[Prompt Questions: How did you develop your vision for learning in this school? To what extent are teachers and the SLT involved in developing the vision?]

*[Probe: How does that vision reflect your school's context?]*

- *Is the vision displayed anywhere in the school? If so, where?*

<b>C.</b>	<b>Managing the instructional programme</b>
-----------	---

- *What role do you play in the overall management of the school curriculum?*

[Prompts: Who decides the percentage of curriculum time to be spent on each subject? Who decides about the allocation of teachers to each class? Do you target the C/D borderline at Key Stage 4?]

- *Who is responsible for reviewing and developing the curriculum within the English & Maths Departments?*
- *How and to what extent is the SLT involved in monitoring and evaluating the curriculum?*

*[Probe 1: How do you monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum?*

*Probe 2: Who determines the nature and pattern of leadership distribution in your school?]*

<b>D.</b>	<b>Principles of Instructional Leadership practices</b>
-----------	---

<b>D1.</b>	<b>Evaluation of results</b>
------------	------------------------------

- *How do you evaluate the students' progress and performance?*

*[Prompt: examination results scrutiny and any other systematic assessments]*

- *In case of students' variation of performance, what is the strategy for improvement?*

*[Prompt: How do you address the underperformance of: Students? Teachers? Department?]*

- *To what extent does monitoring of classroom teaching contribute to high performance?*

<b>D2.</b>	<b>Monitoring, including observation and feedback</b>
------------	---

- *Do you directly monitor and evaluate teacher's performance? If so, how?*

*[Prompt: Do you arrange class visits to observe teachers? Do you check teachers' lesson plans? Do you compare examination results of each teacher? How do you use the data? ]*

*[Probe: If not, whose responsibility is it? Who is responsible for the process of performance management?]*

- *To what extent, and in what ways, do you discuss teachers' performance with the SLT or Middle Managers?*
- *How do you check that feedback provided to the teachers is effectively used by them?*
- *Are you monitoring the work of the Departments (the quality of teaching, students' consistency in assessment, etc)? And how?*

<b>D3.</b>	<b>Mentoring</b>
------------	------------------

- *Do you coach or mentor teachers to improve their performance?*

*[Probe: If so, to what extent and how?*

*If not, who provides teachers' mentoring & coaching?]*

<b>D4.</b>	<b>Modeling</b>
------------	-----------------

- *Do you have a regular teaching commitment? If so, do you model good teaching techniques through your own teaching?*
- *Do you encourage good teachers to model good practice for their peers, within or across departments?*

<b>D5.</b>	<b>Teacher Development – Professional Growth</b>
------------	--

- *What is the school's approach to the professional development of teachers?*

*[Prompts: encouraging teachers to attend conferences, seminars, in-service training, postgraduate programme; encouraging collaboration with others]*

- *Which are the criteria for selecting teacher candidates for CPD opportunities?*

*[Probe: Do you encourage senior or middle leaders to develop as leaders? If so, how? ]*

<b>E.</b>	<b>Headteacher's reflection, general comments &amp; Closing Questions</b>
-----------	---

*Is there anything else you would like to comment on?*

- *So, what makes this school outstanding?*

Please add any comments you believe that they will help my research to fulfill its aims. Your information will still be kept confidential!

***Thank you very much for participating in the interview. Your contribution to my research study is valuable and your co-operation is greatly appreciated!!!***

If you would consider having a copy of your interview transcription, in terms of member checking to validate your responses, please inform the researcher. Yes / No

If you would be willing to receive a report on the project's results, inform the researcher. Yes / No

Address for those requesting a research report: .....

## APPENDIX B: Principal Observation Schedule – Themes Framework

This is a semi-structured Observation Framework where the researcher, as a non-participant observer, takes field notes on the behaviour, attitudes and activities of the principal observed at the research site. The researcher assures confidentiality and anonymity and informs the principal that she is the only person to have access to the raw data collected for the research.

### Background information

Pseudonym used in the analysis of the study: School:..... Principal: .....

Type of the School:..... Geographical Area of school: .....

**Aim of the observation:** To identify what proportion of time the headteacher devotes as an instructional leader as opposed to management focused activities.

### Observation procedure:

The researcher will observe the principal's day at school and then she will indicate the frequency of these activities and behaviours in the school.

Observational **data** will be gathered from 8:00 a.m. to the end of the principal's day, so that the researcher will have the chance to observe and note an approximate sequence of events, recording of the time and timing of events, non-verbal communication, behavioural issues, etc. The observation will be recorded in field notes, where at the **level of description** it includes: fragmentary jottings of key words/ symbols [ √ ], description of physical settings of events, description of events, behavior, activities and the observer's comments that are placed on the predetermined themes with potential principal's activities.

**Guidelines for directing observations** include answers to the following questions: Who is taking part? What is taking place? Where does the scene take place (context of the observation: classroom, meeting, staff development session)? How long does it take place? How repetitive are the behavior observed? What is the sequence of the activities? How do the participants behave to each other? What is being discussed frequently? What non-verbal communication is taking place?

At the **level of reflection**, observer's field notes will include analysis of what has been done and reaction to what has been observed. (Cohen et al., 2001: 311-313)



## CHECK LIST OF POTENTIAL PRINCIPAL'S ACTIVITIES DURING A SCHOOL DAY

### EXTRACT OF 1<sup>st</sup> PART: CHECK LIST OF POTENTIAL PRINCIPAL'S ACTIVITIES DURING A SCHOOL DAY

Time	A. Administrative Tasks/ Other Non-LfL activities	B. Vision for Learning	C. Curriculum & Teaching Tasks	D1. Evaluation of results	D2. Monitoring	D3. Mentoring	D4. Modelling	D5. Teacher's Professional Development
08.00 a.m.								
08.30								
09.00								
09.30								
10.00								
10.30								
11.00								
11.30								
12.00								
12.30								
13.00								
13.30								
14.00								
14.30								
15.00								
15.30								
16.00								
16.30								

<p><b>EXTRACT OF 2<sup>nd</sup> PART: OBSERVER'S REFLECTION AND GENERAL COMMENTS</b></p> <p><b>(based on description themes)</b></p>
--

<b>C.</b>	<b>Curriculum &amp; Teaching Task</b>
-----------	---------------------------------------

- *What role does the principal play in the overall management of the instructional programme (curriculum)?*

[Prompts: What is the percentage of curriculum time that s/he spends per subject? Who decides about the allocation of teaching responsibilities in each grade or class? Does s/he decide where the “star teacher” goes? Does s/he target the C/D borderline at Key Stage 4?]

Curriculum and teaching related tasks	
Curriculum development	Allocation of teaching responsibilities
Coordinating curriculum	Checking lesson preparation

**Comments:**.....  
 .....

<b>D1.</b>	<b>Evaluation of results</b>
------------	------------------------------

- *How does s/he evaluate the students' performance?*
- *In case of underperformance, what is the strategy for improvement?*

[Prompt: How does s/he address the underperformance of: Students? Teachers? Department? ]

Monitoring students' work	
Monitoring student progress	Intervention strategies
Evaluating results in a way that decisions about curriculum development are made	Addressing within school variations

**Comments:**.....  
 .....

## APPENDIX C: Senior Leadership Team Meeting- Observation Schedule

This is a semi-structured Observation Framework where the researcher, as a non-participant observer, takes field notes on the topics discussed, behaviour, attitudes and activities of the members of the SLT observed at the research site. The researcher assures confidentiality and anonymity and informs the Senior Leadership Team that she is the only person to have access to the raw data collected for the research.

**Background information:** Pseudonym used in the analysis of the study: School:..... SLT: .....

Type of the School:..... Geographical Area of school: .....

**Aim of the observation:** To identify the proportion of time that the Senior Leadership Team devotes to discussing issues on school benefits from academy status concerning school's improvement and raising student outcomes as opposed to the time on financial and other matters.

### Observation procedure:

The researcher will observe the SLT scheduled meeting on 'Converting the School to Academy Status' and then she will indicate the frequency of discussing issues which may have implications to school's improvement, by raising standards and achieving enhanced students' results.

Observational **data** will be gathered **from 4:15 p.m. to the end of the SLT meeting**, so that the researcher will have the chance to observe and note an approximate sequence of events, recording of the time and timing of events, non-verbal communication, behavioural issues, etc. The observation will be recorded in field notes, where at the **level of description** it includes: fragmentary jottings of key words/ symbols [ ✓ ], description of physical settings of events, description of events, behavior, activities and the observer's comments that are placed on the **predetermined themes with potential SLT discussing issues which were given by the principal of the school so that to be discussed in 3 groups, a week before this scheduled meeting.**

**Guidelines for directing observations** include answers to the following questions: Who is taking part? What is taking place? Where does the scene take place (context of the observation: classroom, meeting, staff development session)? How long does it take place? How repetitive are the behavior observed? What is the sequence of the activities? How do the participants behave to each other? What is being discussed frequently? What non-verbal communication is taking place?

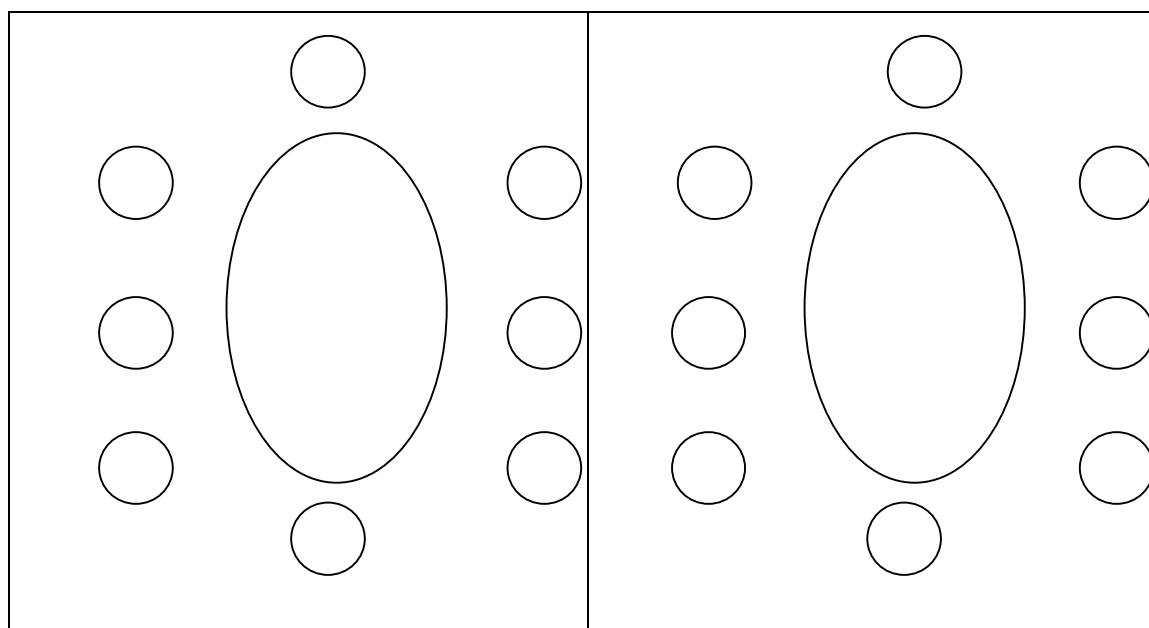
At the **level of reflection**, observer's field notes will include analysis of what has been done and reaction to what has been observed. (Cohen et al., 2001: 311-313)

**CHECK LIST OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM'S DISCUSSING ISSUES  
DURING THE SLT WEDNESDAY SCHEDULED MEETING**

Time	A. Administrative Issues/ Non-LfL activities	B. Vision	C. Curriculum	D. Enhancing student results	E. Teacher's Learning	F. School Budgets	<i>Taking into consideration:</i>
04.15  p.m.  (5mins slot)							Who takes part?  How long does it take place?  How repetitive are the behaviors observed?  How SLT members behave to each other?  What non-verbal commu nication is taking place?

**Observer's reflection and general comments**

**Figure showing the interactions between the SLT members**



## **APPENDIX D: Consent Form signed by the School Teachers**

### **Outline Consent Form**

I, the undersigned....., teacher  
of the (name of the school) .....

....., have read very carefully the Letter  
requesting permission to participate in this doctoral research study in our school.  
I agree to my participation in the doctoral research of Maria Kaparou.

The purpose of the research has been explained to me, and I understand the  
methods which will be used.

I also understand that, even though I have agreed to participate in the study, I  
may withdraw from this research, discontinuing my participation while it is  
voluntary, if I am displeased at something that comes to my notice.

I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Covering  
Letter (information sheet).

Name:.....

Signed:.....

Date:.....

(Researcher to keep the signed copy and leave the unsigned copy with the respondent)

## APPENDIX E: Covering Letter to the Head Teacher of the School



Maria Kaparou

Doctoral  
Researcher in  
Educational  
Leadership

Westwood Campus

CV4 7AL, UK

[School Head's Name]

[Name of the School]

[School Address]

14<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Dear [School Head's Name],

My name is Maria Kaparou, and as a PhD student at the University of Warwick I am currently undertaking a doctoral research study in educational leadership. The research project is focused on *Leadership for Learning* in high performing secondary schools in England and Greece. [School's Name] has been identified for inclusion because of its 'outstanding' rating in the most recent Ofsted inspection.

**The purpose of this research** is to explore Leadership for Learning in high performing secondary schools within two contrasting education systems.

The research would involve me spending one week in your school, during the autumn term and at a mutually convenient time. During my visit, I would like to undertake the following activities:

- **Analysis of Documents**, such as student examination results, league tables, official statistics, Ofsted Inspection Reports, and internal documents.
- **Interviews with the principal, other senior leaders and middle leaders** to examine whether and how they are involved in Leadership for Learning.

- **Interview with 8 teachers** of each school to establish their views on Leadership for Learning.
- **Shadowing the headteacher** for one day, to observe how you lead and manage the school.

The research will adhere to all the ethical guidelines laid down by the University, including treating all documents and interview responses as confidential. The school and individual participants will not be identified.

Acknowledging that participants' rights will be protected during data collection, I would be grateful if you could give your consent using the enclosed form.

If you are interested in the findings of this research study, please let me aware, and I will be glad to send a copy of them to you on completion of this research.

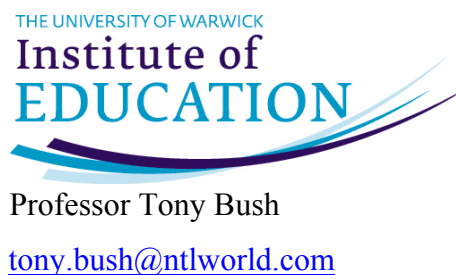
I hope you will find my research journey interesting.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation!

Yours sincerely

Maria Kaparou  
Doctoral Researcher in Educational  
Leadership & Management  
Tel: [researcher's mobile number]  
Email: [M.Kaparou@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:M.Kaparou@warwick.ac.uk)

## **APPENDIX F: Letter of support by the University of Warwick**



[School Head's Name]

[Name of the School]

[School Address]

Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Dear [School Head's Name]

### **MS. MARIA KAPAROU**

I should be most grateful if you would allow my research student, Maria Kaparou, to conduct part of her research in your school. Maria is a Ph.D. student who is engaged in a comparative study of leadership for learning in a sample of schools in England and Greece. She is focusing on 'high performing' schools and your school has been chosen because of its 'outstanding' students' performance in the Pan-Hellenic examination results.

The research would involve Maria spending one week in your school, talking to staff and shadowing you for one day. She is an experienced teacher and school leader in her native Athens. She also has very good interpersonal skills.

If you agree, the first step would be for Maria to visit your school for a preliminary discussion, to explain what the research would involve, and to agree a suitable time for the one week visit. Ideally, this would be Spring Term (January 2011 - April 2011), when it is convenient for you and your school.

I hope that you will feel able to help with Maria's research.

With thanks and best wishes

**Tony Bush**

**Professor of Educational Leadership**



## **APPENDIX G: Extract from the interview transcription of a Senior Leader in school A**

Pseudonym of School: A   Pseudonym of the interviewee: CA (Tuesday 12/10/2010)

Interviewer: What proportion of time, do you think, the headteacher devotes to LfL activities?

Interviewee CA: ...[pause]... I think her style is very much taking of everything to herself, she is very centralised. Em, now I don't think anybody can do that. Not in current day headship because of the range of things has to go on. I just think that only one person cannot do everything from office stuffing right away to curriculum. And I think that's why you have got a number of people that are on edge of that, including deputies and senior teachers, sorry I call them senior teachers but they are assistant heads, who...em, are not doing [pause], they keep themselves busy, but it's just keeping themselves busy rather than doing stuff fulfilling, and stuff that's really taking us forward. The head is spending too much time working on her own and at times she is informed of what is going on rather than being part of the process of what is going on.

Interviewer: Are there any other members of the SLT or Middle Managers highly involved in the LfL activities?

Interviewee CA: I sit now as a Senior Leader feeling that I don't fit in.... I have no real part to play, I don't feel part of team, I don't feel motivated. I still do my job in [name] Department with all that... But in terms of my whole school role, eem ...[long pause]...I don't feel that level of involvement or...[long pause] I'm needed.

Interviewer: [Participant's name], who decides the D/C borderline at Key stage 4?

Interviewee CA: In a subject? We do that within the department. Well, my responsibility in the Senior Leadership Team is data.. Em, and we have got quite strong tracking system at Year 11. e focus on those predicted a D or estimated a D in English or Maths or English and Maths and looking to sort it. We have youngsters who take Maths a year early because they are able, we have some who take it in November of Year 11 because they are borderline youngsters and we want them get in early and try get their grade C for them, and if they don't get it,

then they've got another shot [...] We've got a modular system that involves the bottom taking modules, so we've got a very flexible pathway. We have a variety of suitable pathways for youngsters, appropriate to them, their ability and their needs.

Interviewer: And, in case of underperformance what is the strategy for improvement within individuals?

Interviewee CA: Well, there are a couple of different things. Underperformance in Maths or English, or both?

Interviewer: Let's talk about your subject in more detail.

Interviewee CA: Ok, in Maths, because we said we know that these youngsters are gonna be under-performing before the data comes out, what happens sometimes is you get youngsters who are in set safely get a B but they get a C, and then we just ask questions as to Why? And, you know in some cases because they've gone off the border across, it's then an issue of the pastoral team. But sometimes it's a subject's issue and so we do a variety of things, we might look at some changes...

Interviewer: In that case, what mechanisms do you activate to help them improve their performance?

Interviewee CA: Em, a change of teachers might be good for them, it might be just fresh environment, it might be the criteria of entry is not suitable and we should change that so then we move them to another group. It may be that for a short period of time we look for other students to help, we use a lot 6<sup>th</sup> Form high level students for doing one-to-one stuff, either in the classroom or during lunch time. [Pause]. Not so much distracting them from lessons cause we don't want to go down that line. We do some stuff through lunch time, after school, during holidays. We look at that in a way that those youngsters do not achieve as much as they should, so we will do this, this and this, and we will locate them somewhere and we think of, ok, what is the best package for that child and what we can do to respond to that and if they don't respond to that we may need to change that and try something else.

## APPENDIX H: Case study protocol

### Cross-country case study protocol

The cross-country case study protocol serves as a framework for the construction and analysis of the research cases, as it includes:

- **Pre-fieldwork management:**

- Identifying prominent research in the area of study, create the theoretical framework and use it as a guidance for the research design
- Finalising the objectives of the study and the research questions addressed
- Identify the multiple-case data collection design. Apart from the type of evidence that the researcher was expected to collect [as stated in the covering letter to the school participants (see Appendix E)] data gathering flexibility was a key element to ensure depth and breadth. For example, in the Greek cases, two externals [subject advisers] were added in the sample; whilst, in the English school B, i) the Teaching and Learning Leader [EB] was also included in the senior leaders' sample, and, ii) an additional observation [secondary leadership development day] added to the case study database in data collection.
- Identifying case schools selection criteria
- Negotiating access to enter field sites
- Policy analysis (external and governmental)
- Designing research instruments for both countries to suit each data set separately

- **Data collection management**

- Agreeing with the gatekeeper the researcher's role in the case study procedure
- Policy analysis (internal)
- Conducting a pilot case study
- Conducting Fieldwork

- Case study questions

Although the main focus of the research questions is on exploring principals as instructional leaders in the two contrasting education systems (see chapter one), the researcher had in mind a set of questions targeted to other members of senior and/or middle leaders involved in LfL activities. The major question that the researcher posed to herself to keep her on track as data collection proceeds (Yin, 2009: 86), is:

If an instructional leadership practice is not adopted by the principal, whose responsibility is it? (generic question)

This type of question served as a prompt in asking questions to further investigate the line of inquiry (e.g., see Appendix A: D2 probe question: ‘If not, whose responsibility is the monitoring and evaluation of teachers’ performance? / D3: Who provides teachers’ mentoring and coaching?)

- Making Field notes
- Transcribing individual interviews
- Writing observations’ reports
- Identifying key data elements of analysis
- Mapping concepts derived from fieldwork
- Member checking for data validation
- **Post-fieldwork stage**
  - Findings interpretation criteria in order to reduce data: pattern matching to triangulate findings; thematic construction in which the data from different data collection methods were interpreted; findings interpretation based on the three data sets (SL, ML, teachers) in order to cross-check validity of the findings; identification of the data which addresses the research questions
  - Case study report writing based on a thematic outline
  - Considering feedback from the critical debriefing relationship with a peer

- **Case study Analysis (within and across cases)**

- Cross-case analysis: comparing- contrasting themes emerged from the 2 clusters of cases (English and Greek cases) within a contextual framework of analysis, as context might impact results
- Cross-country comparative analysis within a thematic framework, based on the study's research questions. This analysis led to the construction of a template for findings discussion in relation to cross-country evidence, its relationship with contextual imperatives (e.g. centralization/decentralization) and enfolding existing literature.